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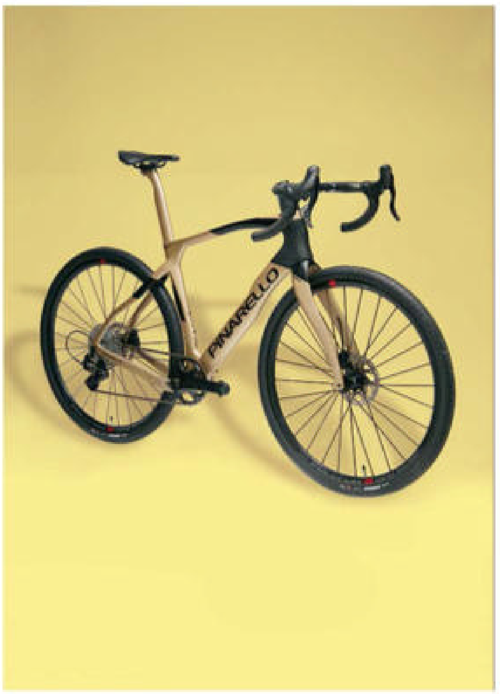

ON THE COVER

The **Pinarello Grevil F** (*unoimports.com*) is the Italian brand's top model for gravel racing. Like the Dogma F road bike, the Grevil F is designed for the snagging podiums at the world's biggest events. This model—that comes to *Canadian Cycling Magazine* courtesy of La Bicicletta in Toronto (*labicicletta.com*)—is outfitted with the **Campagnolo Ekar** gravel groupset. There's a 13-speed cassette that ranges from a nine-tooth to a 42-tooth cog. The frame rolls on **Fulcrum Rapid Red 900** wheels. Up front, the **Jaguar** handlebar and **Tiger** stem, both by **Pinarello**, add to the bike's overall aerodynamics by allowing the cables and hoses to run internally. For more on the Pinarello Grevil F, head to p.60 of the buyer's guide.

Photo: Tim Foster

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EDITOR'S LETTER

As Gear-y as I Want To Be

A serious look at the stuff we ride with

I didn't laugh, but I got the joke.

In January, as I was planning this buyer's guide, the *New Yorker* published a cartoon with a cyclist. It features a rider, in kit, handling his bike at a repair stand. He's surrounded by a peloton of callouts labelling everything. And I mean everything: aerodynamic helmet, cycling cap, spandex (jersey), more spandex (bibs), degreaser, grease, other grease, light, another light, racing tires, chain lube, water bottle, water bottle cage and more. There are even "other thingies" that lie at his feet. Above him reads, "If you give a dad a bicycle, he's going to want..." Get it?

Oh, I get it. Ours is a gear-y passion. Cartoonist Maggie Larson could have added a power meter, heart-rate monitor, tubeless-tire sealant and a digital air-pressure gauge. It might blow her mind that some of us buy slow cookers just for waxing our chains, not to mention the ultrasonic cleaners for getting the component truly spotless. Actually, Larson might know about that stuff, too. It seems she's a rider, but one who's not keen on spandex. Maybe there simply wasn't room on the page for all the gear stuff.

Part of me doesn't like how the cartoon singles out cycling as an exercise in excess. My hunch is Larson's dig at a certain type of cyclist isn't vicious, just a knowing sort of teasing. Still, I feel a bit defensive. Ours isn't the only passion that is stuff-heavy. The "simple" pursuit of camping can lead to cycling levels of weight-weenieism, especially if you are looking for ultralight shelters. I have an audiophile friend who has a stunning mixer that's the price of a mid- to high-end bike. This past winter, I finally replaced my 30-year-old skate skis. You know what? The bindings are largely carbon fibre, and they are wicked. You should see my collection of glide wax.

> "It might blow her mind that some of us buy slow cookers just for waxing our chains."

The bite I feel from Larson's comic, its sting, comes out of something that I struggle with, and you might, too. The beauty of cycling is the feeling of freedom it gives you. We all have memories of the feelings of independence we gained from our first rides around the block, solo or with friends. Our bikes made our territories a little bit bigger. There were more places to explore. Our tires were probably pumped once a season. Chain maintenance? What was that? Our bikes seemed perpetually ready for action. Now, maybe it's an adult diligence that has me monitoring tire pressure closely, as well as chain wear. (On my commuter, however, not so much.) But sometimes the rituals the night before a ride can be a drag: lubing, pumping and checking charges in numerous batteries. The carefree feeling is dormant until the actual riding starts.

Still, I ultimately dig gear. I want to know how things are made and hear from their designers. I want to know how things work. And, I want to try them out for myself. For me, it's all part of the fun. Also, cycling can still be simple. You don't have to go full gear head. Basic maintenance skills are a must. But really, if you have a bike you love to ride, you're totally sorted.

Matthew Pioro
Editor

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Celebrating a world champion

Four days after becoming the junior women's cyclocross world champion, Isabella Holmgren was back to school, where there were decorations, cupcakes in her calculus class and the last lap of her big race played on a loop on a TV near the entrance to the building. The sport of cyclocross isn't well-known in this country, but at the Holmgren's small French-language high school in Barrie, Ont., the staff and students had a good sense of what the rider had accomplished in the mud in the Netherlands, and they wanted to celebrate.

Not only does Isabella go to l'école secondaire catholique

> *"I was just so happy to see my parents after the finish line and see my sister right behind me."*

Photo: CX Hairs

Nouvelle-Alliance, but so does her twin sister Ava, who was second at the world championship race. Their teammate Ian Ackert, 11th in the junior men's race, attends the school, too, while their older brother, World Cup cross country rider Gunnar, is an alumnus. No wonder there were cupcakes.

Ten days after Isabella's big win, and after a full day of school, she looked back to the championships. "The morning of the race, it was raining," Isabella recalled. "Ava and I walked over to the course to check the conditions. We decided it would be best to run mud tires, as opposed to the low-profile tires that we were going to ride. At the start line, very few other girls had mud tires. I think they were concerned about their rolling resistance. But we knew if we had good grip in the corners, that would be a pretty big advantage."

Ava, who is the current junior CX Pan Am champ and elite national champ, got to the front of the race by the start of the second lap. Dutch star Lauren Molengraaf led for a bit before going down. Isablla took the lead early in the third, and held on to the end. As she crossed the finish line, she was flooded with emotions. "I was tired from racing," she said, "but also surprised to have won. And I was just so happy to see my parents after the finish line and see my sister right behind me."

Next for the sisters will be work with their new road team, the Netherlands-based Watersley Race and Development squad. In the summer they will be back in their home country to race Canada Cups. They hope to attend the cycling world championships in August in both road and mountain biking. Maybe there'll be even more celebrations later this year.—*Matthew Pioro*

Himalayan hockey and hiking as cross-training

Cory Walllace's winter training always looks a little different, a little more wild, than the average pro. While most cyclists seek out easy base miles in warm climates, Wallace often ends up in far-flung locations.

This past January, the Jasper, Alta., endurance racer headed to the Himalayas for altitude training off the bike with a 36-day hiking trip through remote regions of Nepal. The trek ended in the most spectacularly Canadian way possible: with some hockey on a frozen lake, but under Mount Everest's shadow at roughly 5,000 m.

Carving turns in Himalayan ice took some planning. After spotting the Gokyo Lakes' potential for pond hockey in 2020, Wallace packed skates with his bike when he returned to Nepal this year. With the help of a friend, he got the hockey gear for the final week of his month-long trek. "I had to hang the skates outside my bag, same with the sticks," Wallace says. "It made the pack pretty heavy." It also attracted attention. "Everyone was interested. All the Sherpas thought they were skis." Then came three days of scenic shinny.

Wallace expects the hiking and hockey to prepare him for the riding he'll do this year. "The trekking is pure base. When you hike up a mountain for three hours, it's perfect for building up the muscles," he says. "And the altitude really boosts the cardio system." The skating and stickhandling give Wallace a mental break from the bike, which is important for a rider who competes in 24-hour events.

Passing more lakes on his hike out had Wallace planning his next trip. "I left my skates and stick up at a lodge in the region," he says. "I'm hoping to get a full-on game up there next winter."—*Terry McKall*

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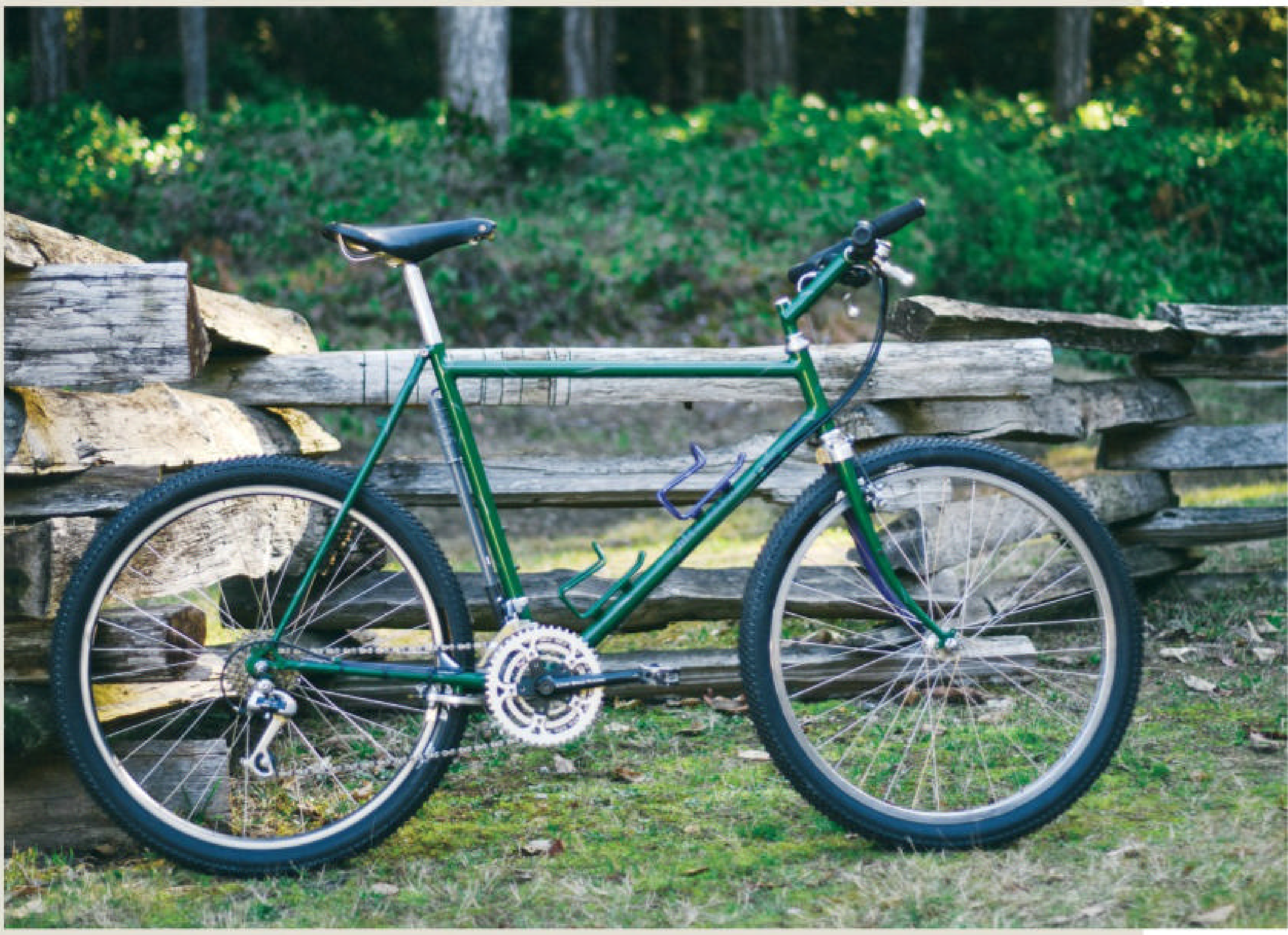

Custom Dale Saso Mountain Bike

In 1984, I asked Dale Saso to build me a mountain bike. Dale owned a bike shop in San Jose and was a well-regarded frame builder. I chose Dale—who's still making bikes today—after seeing one of his "bike trucks" (26" rear wheel, 20" front wheel, with a large rack/basket mounted to the frame). I thought it was super cool. I was planning on using my mountain bike to tour Europe, so I designed it with a slightly steeper head tube, lower bottom-bracket height and lots of braze-ons, including a pump mount behind the seat tube. I also requested a "fastback" seat-tube/seatstay junction, which was common on Tom Ritchey's bikes (and I thought looked great).

I rode this bike all around Europe in 1986. I followed the Tour de France, which Greg LeMond won. Like LeMond, I wore a pair of Oakley Eyeshades. They drew a lot of attention, as did my custom mountain bike all decked out for touring.

After bending the original fork, I replaced it with a Bontrager composite fork. The bike also has a Bontrager handlebar and stem from the same time period. Its first groupset was the original Shimano XT group, but I upgraded to SIS when it was introduced. There is a Cooks Bros. Racing crank with Suntour XC pedals—the hot setup at the time. Also from Suntour, at the chainstays, is the Roller Cam rear brake, which the company had licensed from WTB. The Grab On foam grips are still good after almost 40 years.—*Rob White*

Photos: Jennifer Armstrong

THE SCENE

SQUATTER'S FRIGHTS

The pressures of a nature break

by **Holly Clarke**

There I was at one of the biggest gravel events in the world, squatting on the side of the doubletrack. I was semi-naked, mid-stream, with my bum exposed to the vast, wide-open landscape as hundreds of cyclists rode by at a gravel pace. As if I wasn't already feeling sheepish enough, as a dude rode by, he looked at me and said, "Now I've seen it all."

The roadside stop is "easy-pee-sy" for those of you who can take a nature break without getting off the bike. Maybe it's at a complete stop, requiring only a shift of clothing, standing over the top tube. Maybe it's like the super-skilled peeing-while-riding pro with little interruption to the flow of his ride. For you, your business is quick and relatively discreet.

For the rest of us—and let me say it: I mean women, really—it's just not that simple. The logistics of finding and selecting a squat spot are much more complex, though it doesn't take as long as you think when the call is pressing.

Let's face it: there is never a perfect time or place for a nature break outdoors. Watching those kilometres tick away while your back teeth begin to float, your focus shifts from riding to searching for a place to pee that isn't private property or completely exposed. The surveying can feel like an eternity.

Once the group stops, however, experienced female riders can get the job done as fast as an F1 pit stop. We lay our precious carbon-fibre bikes down on the ground (drive side up, obviously) with haste and sprint into the woods taking our jerseys off as we go.

Where to put the jersey? Location is key, which I learned the hard way. I was out for a solo spin, a long way from any door with a restroom sign on it, and had to pee badly. I threw my jersey on the ground, went about my business and then happily resumed my ride. A few minutes later, it felt as if my skin was crawling. It was actually a sea of tiny little critters crawling on me. Not to make a mountain out of an ant hill, but I'd become one. The transplanted ants were all over me.

Now I ask a friend to hold my jersey, or place it on top of my bike, or hang it on a branch. But, regardless of where the jersey goes, a woman has to strip down to a sports bra, which brings up another issue—do you know how cold that is in the winter months?

Before gravel cycling, I couldn't tell one plant from another. The truth is, I probably still can't identify most, but I can spot poison ivy like an amateur botanist when I am scanning the flora around a potential rest stop. What do ticks and cyclists have in common? They both like to squat in woody, grassy and brushy areas. So, be tick aware. Your business can truly be risky business.

When I first started riding, I let pee guilt keep me from asking for a break. I now simply call a nature break before I reach the bursting point.

I also used to worry about getting chirped for those "when you gotta go, you gotta go" moments. I didn't want to face comments, such as buddy's "Now I've seen it all." In the past, that line would have gotten to me. But now, with experience, I've learned to roll my eyes and simply say, piss off.

Holly Clarke rides for the Toronto Hustle gravel team.

> "The roadside stop is 'easy-pee-sy' for some of you."

Photo: Holly Clarke

THE SCENE

CYCLING AND THE LAW

Navigating the Potholes of Spring

by **Dave Shellnutt**

In anticipation of a busy cycling season, Edward bundled up, dusted off his bike and hit the freshly thawed streets of Toronto. Soon into his ride, he came upon an intersection dotted with potholes. In navigating these hazards, while being vigilant for distracted motorists, Edward made an S-turn manoeuvre around two potholes. (The rider's name has been changed for privacy reasons.) Suddenly, he found himself cycling straight for a difficult-to-see and sunken storm drain close to the curb. He hit this sunken drain, flew off his bike and shattered his collar bone, later requiring surgery.

> "Carefully photograph and measure the pothole that caused your fall."

Soon after surgery, with his cycling season scuppered and a long road to recovery ahead, Edward contacted me for legal advice. As I always do, I ensured that he had sought medical attention, which he had done. If you are in a crash, even if you don't think you're seriously injured, go to the ER or your doctor for a professional assessment.

If you've been injured and/or your bike's been damaged, the next step is to photograph and measure the pothole that caused your fall carefully. You'll want a ruler, tape measure and a second set of hands. Measure and document with photos the precise height, width, depth and location of the section of road that's fallen into disrepair. You'll want to do this step as soon as possible. If you're unable to for medical reasons, send a friend.

Another cyclist client of mine hit a pothole that had exposed a water main. The rider broke his elbow. He took some immediate post-crash pictures without precise measurements. I asked him to go back to the scene with his measuring tape, but the city had fixed the road's disrepair. A liability fight has ensued.

Here in Ontario, I have to be so diligent about measurements because the Municipal Act sets out that the size and age a pothole must be before the city if it is to be held liable for the damage the hole causes to a motor vehicle. (This applies to cyclists as well.)

In British Columbia, the law regarding potholes and road maintenance is a little less prescriptive. Municipalities are held to a standard of reasonableness—not perfection. If you want to make a claim against a city for damages, there are tight timelines. You must notify the appropriate municipality within two months. A claim must be commenced within two years. If, however, you intend to argue that maintenance policies are involved, you must start the claim within six months. In Nova Scotia, before you sue a municipality, you have to give 30 days prior notice of your intent to sue. Then, you must sue within 12 months.

What's consistent from province to province is that most policy decisions around fixing road disrepair are not subject to liability. But if inspection guidelines are not followed or notices from members of the public go ignored, then your claim might withstand government pushback, which can be tough.

In Ontario, the size of what amounts to an unacceptably large pothole depends on the character of the street it inhabits, based on the road's speed limit and average daily traffic. The higher the speed limit and/or traffic volume, the acceptable pothole size is relatively smaller and it needs a quicker repair time. Conversely, a street with a lower speed limit and little traffic volume can "support" a larger pothole. The parties responsible for repairs have more time before they have to make the fix.

But there is another complication: the time limit for repairing a particular pothole only starts running once the municipality has been put on notice of the hole's existence or once the regular inspection has made a record of it.

Municipalities often do their best to perform seasonal patch-and-repair sweeps. They, however, perform this process with car tires in mind. I have asked municipal employees under oath how they go about this work. They drive along city streets in pickup trucks and see what looks out of the ordinary or potentially hazardous. I suspect they bring a motorist's perspective to notions of "out of the ordinary" or "potentially hazardous." Potholes and road disrepair should also be assessed on how they would affect a person riding a bicycle, too. My team and I are making those legal arguments on behalf of cyclists before courts across our province.

If you find yourself safely navigating your way around a wild pothole, I encourage you to help hard-working municipal staff and to help protect fellow cyclists by contacting the proper authorities in your area. Ask them to fix the issue. Municipal pothole repair contact information is often just a web search away.

If you hit one of these hazards, contact a lawyer and provide the municipality with notice within 10 days. This quick action will preserve your rights in the event your injury turns out to be serious and begins to affect your ability to work or perform your activities of daily living.

Keep your eyes peeled and enjoy your ride. And, do help out in keeping your streets safe. ⓒ

Dave Shellnutt is the founder and managing partner of The Biking Lawyer LLP, lawyers for injured cyclists, *thebikinglawyer.ca*

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Mathieu van der Poel and Wout van Aert

Photo: CX Hairs

THE SCENE

MAKING HISTORY AT HOOGERHEIDE

In the Dutch mud, where cyclocross is king, and where Canucks might just be starting a revolution

by **Pauline Beaupre and Connor Gregory**

If you're a Canadian cyclocross racer and fan, you've no doubt had to explain what 'cross is to friends and family. It can feel awkward and nerdy because, let's face it, it kind of is. When we arrived in Hoogerheide in late February, it was clear that the action, drama, and intensity of cyclocross was well-known. Not only does everyone know 'cross, the stars of the sport are household names the way Sidney Crosby or the Williams sisters are here. Unlike the stick-and-ball sports of North America, cycling, to many Europeans, is simply more relatable. After all, in the Netherlands, it's also a primary form of transportation, undeniably a reason for the country's domination of so many cycling disciplines.

Not long after we landed in the Netherlands, we headed to a bike shop for a live recording of a podcast with a couple of former pros. They discussed their predictions for who would be in form for the Spring Classics and, of course, what they thought would go down at the battle royale between Mathieu van der Poel and Wout van Aert in the elite men's race. As we chatted with people in the shop, they were shocked—shocked that we had flown across the ocean just to watch their regular weekend programming. In a place with multiple professional series and where local races cost €5, people thought we were crazy to come all this way. That said, the first world championship in Europe in three years definitely created a buzz. There were noticeable contingents of fans representing nations outside of the Benelux.

On Saturday, the cyclocross gods smiled down on us with a light rain giving the first races of the day the mudfest we dreamed of. A dry, sunny race might be more spectator-friendly when you're standing outside all day, but like most fans, we were prepared to endure the elements to see the muddy glory. As we walked around, the rave tents were already going, the beer taps were flowing, and of course, as seen on TV, all the wacky costumes were in full effect. For us, the most important race of the weekend, the junior women's, came first. Ava and Isabella Holmgren were having a phenomenal season, so a podium or rainbow jersey was a real possibility. Each lap they came around, the win felt more and more real, like it was actually going to happen. We stood at the finish line as the commentator announced, "Your new junior world champion from Canada." As Canada is not known as a 'cross nation, the cheers were noticeably a bit flatter from the hometown crowd than for the Dutch men and women champions throughout the weekend. We're hoping Isabella's rainbow jersey and the success of the Stimulus Orbea team can bring some of the Dutch energy for 'cross to Canada.

Later, we caught up with the Holmgrens, whom we know, when they weren't in full kit. We literally yelled, "Show us your medals!" They humbly brought them out of their jacket pockets to let us gawk. Strangers nearby began to take notice. "Can we have a photo? Oh, you're the Canadian sisters?" The uncle of Dutch superstar Puck Pieterse leaned over and said to the sisters, "This is only the beginning."

After getting our fill of mud and rain, the following day was bright with a crisp wind. Ruts around the course had dried and hardened. During the first race, the junior men's, we could feel the pulse of the crowd. We couldn't fathom how this many people were excited for 'cross. At home, our race crowds are really only filled with family members and other racers. It felt like a music festival, complete with an unhinged, anxiety-inducing starting-grid soundtrack reminiscent of the *X-Files*, made even more tense by the silent crowds, which were only quiet during the countdown at the line.

With distance, names such as Zonhoven and Hulst can seem mythical to us Canadians. We can easily forget that these are just small towns in the Belgian and Dutch countryside where tens of thousands of fans flock to once a year. Hoogerheide's population sits at a little more than 6,000, but for the world championship weekend, it was more than 40,000 people. You can imagine how a place might not be equipped to deal with such an influx. Unlike traffic jams of personal vehicles you see outside of a North American stadium after a game, Hoogerheide saw thousands of jersey wearing fans trucked in and out on chartered buses along with shuttles operating between the race and the train station the next town over. At the end of the event, we and many others found that regular public transport was diverted, as wobbly Dutch bikes whizzed past with their riders shouting "Mathieu!"

Another lesson we learned from this experience was that you need to plan out your race-watching vantage point ahead of time, as well as how you'll move from one location to the other without missing the action. Unlike other races, and because of the amount of people in attendance, the track was designed specifically to avoid any crossings. Fans herded under the flyovers as they re-upped on beer and fries or posted up somewhere else on the course. Despite how impressive the infrastructure of the event was, the massive crowds still bottlenecked at the key vantage points. Finding a good place was a challenge, and required a full commitment to get a good view of what everyone hopes for at the end: a sprint finish. It is also important, and expected, that you bring back as many cups of beer as you can carry to those guarding your spot.

The main event on Sunday was kicked off by fan favourite Felipe Nystrom from Costa Rica showboating on the steps during his "warm-up" laps to a roaring crowd. The sun was out and the energy was incredible leading up to that explosive sprint finish that will go down in history. We've been racing 'cross and watching it on small screens and at weird hours of the day for decades but still could not comprehend the gravity of the real thing, in the flesh and mud. The jetlag, the beer tent, adrenalin and more than 20,000 steps each day made the post-race weekend feel like a true 'cross hangover.

"This is only the beginning."

Ava and Isabella Holmgren

Photo: Connor Gregory

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THE SCENE

CANADIAN CLUB

Inuvik Cycling Club

Riding above the Arctic Circle

TOP
The start line of Matt's Aklavik Icebreaker, 2022

by **Rob Sturney**

PROFILE
Inuvik Cycling Club

Location	Inuvik, N.W.T.
Established	2020
Members	114

There are few towns in Canada farther north than Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. Located at the 68th parallel in the East Channel of the Mackenzie Delta, the town of 3,100 people sits 100 km south of the Beaufort Sea in the Arctic Ocean and is situated in a transition zone where boreal forest turns to tundra. The average *high* temperature from November to March is -19.5 C.

Such an extraordinary locale demands extraordinary people; the Inuvik Cycling Club is composed of resilient, hardy bike riders who love their sport. So, what is it like to live the two-wheeled life in a place where it's dark for 30 days straight and where there's 24-hour sunlight for 56 summer days?

Chris Bruckner is the president of Inuvik Cycling Club, a free organization he founded in December 2020. The club boasts 114 members. Ten of them are hard-core and always up to roll, and four commute to work. The ICC holds special events—such as last year's Bike Rodeo, in partnership with the Town of Inuvik, for elementary school-age kids—runs a bike share program, coaches, mentors and makes minor repairs and adjustments to the bikes of community cyclists.

The club's regular Sunday group ride in the warmer months is the gravel and sealcoat Airport loop, with those looking for a challenge lighting out for the Jak Park loop and Satellite climb. The club teaches mountain bike fundamentals to new riders, with a focus on proper climbing techniques. The long fat bike season sees well-insulated Northwest Territorians cruise the Boot Lake and Visitor Centre routes, with the strongest riders completing the Old Baldy loop.

> "Mineral oil in brake lines is sluggish below -20 C."

The 24 hours of summer sunlight make for epic bike trips. One of Bruckner's favourites is the gravel grind to Tuktoyaktuk. A shorter excursion, but one even more spectacular in scenery, is the out-and-back to the Gwich'in Territorial Campground on the Dempster Highway.

Inuvik Cycling Club's popular new annual event is Matt's Aklavik Icebreaker held during the second weekend of April. Club member Matt Hamilton died in February 2021. The club named the Icebreaker ride, an event for mental-health awareness, in his honour. The Icebreaker is a fully-supported ride of 120 km on the Inuvik to Aklavik ice road. Studded tires and helmets are mandatory.

One intrepid new member of the ICC made a bold ride for a great cause in November 2022. Karli Zschögner tackled the 138-km road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk to raise more than $4,500 for Tuktoyaktuk's House of Hope, a grassroots suicide-prevention initiative. Lashed by head and cross-winds, Zschögner camped overnight and finished with the help of clubmate Wanda McDonald, who drove out to make regular checks and deliver soup and tea.

Bruckner explains that the nature of Inuvik cycling is "diversity and unpredictable weather patterns." The winter demands that riders "dress according to the conditions and prepare for unforeseen mechanical mishaps." He has invested in top-quality gloves and boots since moving to town. Mineral oil in brake lines is sluggish below -20 C, freehubs fail and other parts momentarily malfunction. Inuvik is fortunate enough to have a shop, Paddy Cycles, to help keep the bikes on the road and the ice.

Photos: Peter Clarkson

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The Riding is On Point

Essex County, the southernmost spot in the country, has top-notch cycling

Toronto
Essex County

by **Christina Palassio**

Day 1 was a head-clearing 90-km ramble along parts of the Chrysler Canada Greenway System from Kingsville, Ont., through Amherstburg to 227-year-old Fort Malden and then back around. Staghorn sumac, trumpet vines and dogwood lined the trail. Dozens of birds swooped overhead but not one was chirping. It was so hot that when I took a selfie at the ice-cream place, I scared myself. I had to hang out until my crimson face went back to its normal colour.

Day 2 was a sunny, breezy 110-km out-and-back along Seacliff and Point Pelee Drives down to the tip of the point, mainland Canada's southernmost spot, which was squawking with purple martins, eastern kingbirds, northern cardinals and barn swallows. Lake Erie roared on the west side of the point while the east side was still as slumber. Two scientists walked up and down the sandy spit quantifying erosion. My friend Dan and I swam twice that day, a long crawl at a secluded east side beach and a second soak back in Kingsville at Cedar Beach while tourists snapped pics off the pier. We had two cones, too, and a Lake Erie perch sandwich at Freddy's.

On Day 3, we pedalled through a pack of a hundred roaring choppers gathered for the Hogs for Hospice fundraiser and caught a ferry just in time. We did a neat little 30-km loop around quiet Pelee Island, all dusty roads and little discoveries and dunked at Sunrise Beach and Lighthouse Point Beach, where the locals told us to take the late ferry back to the mainland so we could watch the sun burn up the sky before dropping below the water. We didn't have lights so we rode from Leamington back to Kingsville in the enveloping dark, a bit of action-adventure we probably could've done without, though our brains and bones thanked the cycling advocates who fought for the multi-use sidewalks that kept us safe from the wheels of speeding cars.

Day 4 was our final day. We rode into Windsor along the fantastic 17-km multi-use Herb Gray Parkway Trail, past the riverfront Sculpture Park and its 31 large-scale sculptures, and waved at Detroit before rolling onto the less-fantastic Ganatchio Trail toward the historic and gentrified Walkerville neighbourhood and Chapter Two Brewing. We liked the beers and the Wolf Parade soundtrack so much we almost started scanning the local real estate listings. The ride home was a real wobble.

What we learned is that the riding in Essex County is so varied that you can line up a week's worth of rides with not one the same. What the county lacks in elevation, it makes up with ride variety, big views, bountiful beaches and local food, and an impressive amount of cycling infrastructure, including off-road trails, on-road bike lanes and the peaceful streets of Pelee Island.

"Our impression is that people from outside aren't really aware that this is a beautiful cycling

Photos: Martin Lortz

The Great Trail
Great Lakes Waterfront

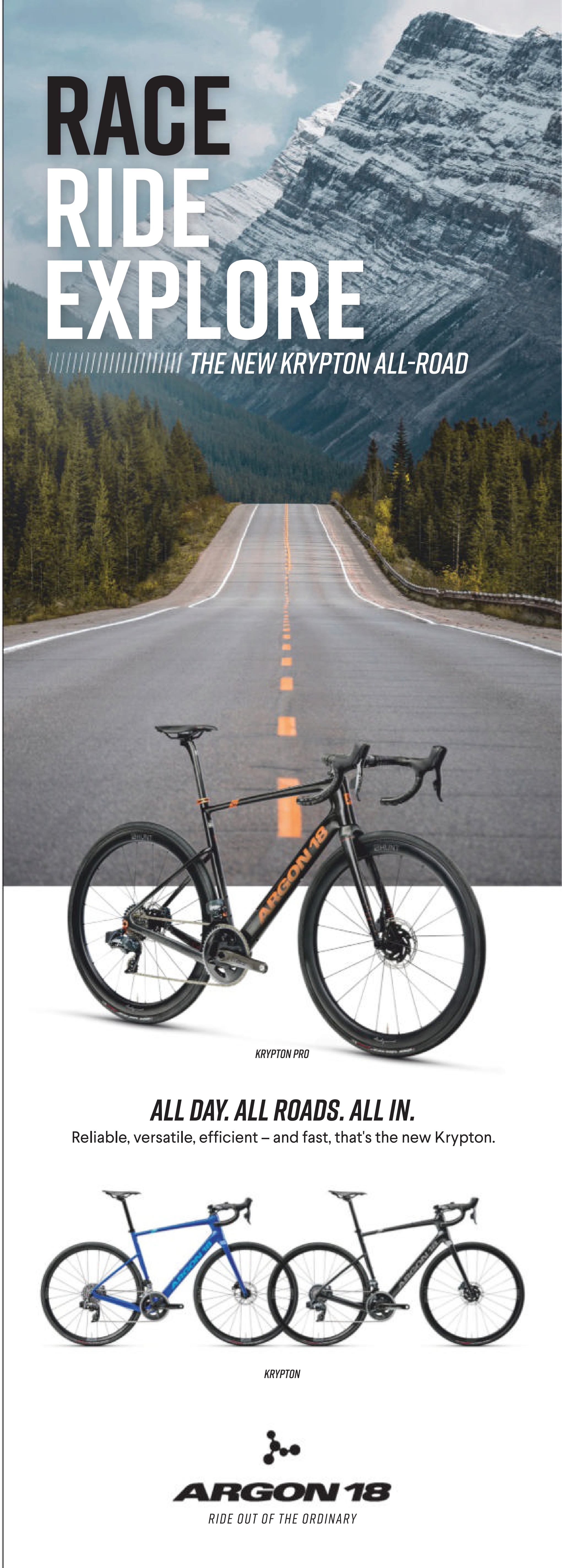
destination with lots of points of interest," says Tom Omstead, a cyclist who, with his wife Sue, has been advocating for bike infrastructure in the area since 2004. "We've done tons of riding: guided tours in France, riding in Niagara, the Cabot Trail, Canmore, Montreal, the Blue Ridge Parkway. This stands up. We don't have hills here, but neither does the Netherlands. And the Netherlands is known as a great biking place."

Essex County is on the southwestern tip of Ontario, home to rich soil, many farming communities, vineyards and First Nations communities—and a ton of bikes. Each spring, thousands of temporary foreign workers stream into the county to power agricultural production. Bicycles are their main form of transportation.

Whether you're riding the Nine Wineries Route near Kingsville, the out-and-back along Lake St. Clair's shores from Tecumseh to Belle River or one of Omstead's longer loops (more on that later), you're sure to see signs that read "CWATS Route," visual reminders of the County Wide Active Transportation System's plan, which began in 2012, to create 800 km of multi-use trails across Essex County's seven municipalities throughout 20 years.

Sue Omstead remembers the council meeting when the CWATS master plan was proposed. "It was so marvelous. We went representing cyclists and advocates. There was the health unit, there was the school board, there was migrant worker representation, there was the Great Waterfront Trail. The local tourism people came and advocated for this plan. And eight municipal organizations unanimously adopted the plan and agreed to a funding mechanism that would be incorporated every year."

Progress has been steady. Between 2012 and 2018, 447 km of on- and off-road routes were implemented, and wayfinding signage was installed throughout the county. In 2022, the CWATS program received $4.9 million in funding, $2.8 million of which was dedicated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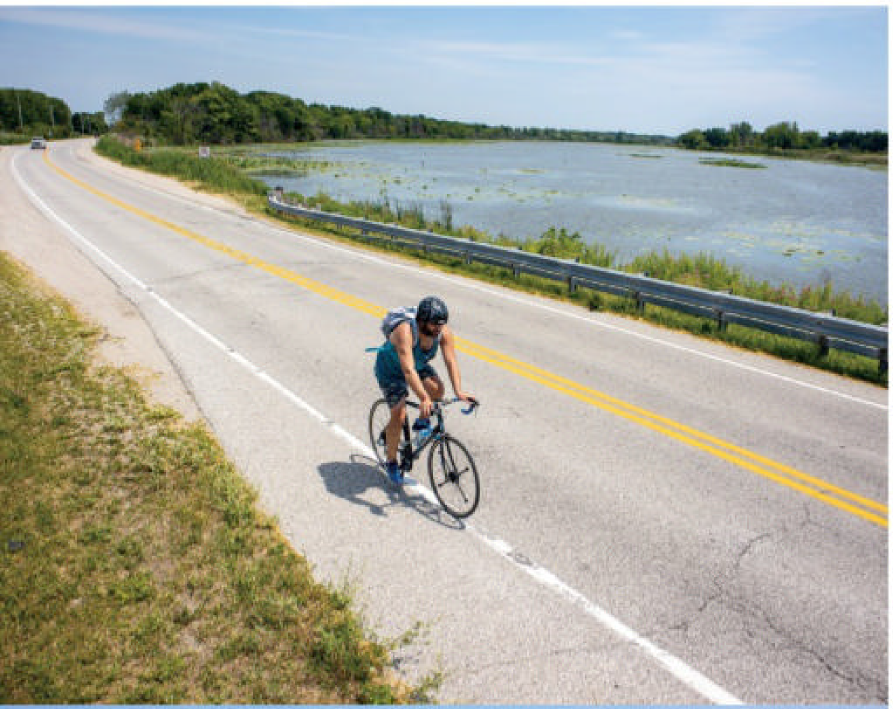
RIDE OUT OF THE ORDINARY

"What the county lacks in elevation, it makes up with ride variety, big views, bountiful beaches and local food, and an impressive amount of cycling infrastructure."

Great Lakes
Waterfront
Trail



to the paved-shoulder program and work on County Roads 18 and 50. Design is also underway for a multi-use trail along County Road 33, which dips down to Point Pelee.

"We're trying to do this in a joined-up fashion so we don't have huge gaps," says Jerry Behl, manager of transportation planning and development for Essex County. "With the partnership approach, there's funding from us, and cost-sharing from the local municipality. We're slowly chipping away at the network and providing facilities across the region."

While there's progress, cyclist and advocate Lori Newton, executive director of The Bike Kitchen and Bike Windsor Essex, says more is needed. Newton rides her Belgian-built steel bicycle all over the county, 365 days a year. "I don't want to own a car. I want to run my errands by bike. I'm passionate about the environment and reducing my carbon footprint. And I'm passionate about connecting neighbourhoods," she says. She feels safer now since CWATS started, but she wants to see more infrastructure, especially in Windsor. "Windsor has so much potential. But it's not a city that is seriously looking at streets for eight to 80. When they call Windsor car town, they really mean car town."

I could see what she meant. After three days of pedalling the county, frequently coming upon gems of newly paved shoulders, entering Windsor's miasma of heavy traffic and cracked streets was a bit of a shock. In 2017, Newton and fellow advocates were successful in convincing the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority to include a separated pedestrian and bike lane on the new Gordie Howe International Bridge that will link Windsor and Detroit. The question now is how the city will beef up its cycling infrastructure to contribute to what is becoming a growing cycling destination.

In spite of Windsor's lack of bike lanes, riding down the city's wide, tree-lined boulevards and experiencing its history by bike was a lot of fun. Other standout moments throughout the weekend: stopping in Malden, a pulled-from-the-past thumbprint of a town with a main street dotted with quaint-looking pubs; making friends with a 23-km/h headwind while riding the newly paved County Road 18 to Muscedere Vineyards for some wood-fired pizza and a glass of rosé; and taking in the spice coming off Leamington's Central American eateries as we biked by.

You can easily ride Essex County on a road bike, but bringing a gravel bike will open up a lot of possibilities, allowing you to get off the pavement and onto Pelee Island National Park's narrow trails, and providing a more comfortable ride on the 50-km-long Chrysler Greenway Trail, which runs from the outskirts of Windsor east to Ruthven, and the shorter, 26-km Cypher Systems Group Greenway, which runs from Amherstburg east to Essex.

Mixing up on- and off-road riding is the name of the game for Tom and Sue

Photos: Martin Lortz, Simon Wilson, Martin Lortz, Martin Lortz

Omstead. They're now focused on mapping quality cycling routes in the area, efforts that have produced the Cycle Essex Kent website and the EC Way 100 Mile Route, a mostly-paved loop that will take you through the best the county has to offer. It's coded based on a red-yellow-green comfort-level rating system that indicates road safety and quality.

"There's lots of activity in the cycling community and lots of routes being made, but there's lots of crap. Our whole focus has shifted from infrastructure to educating people about what's available and what's safe to ride on," Tom Omstead says. "We want to get good information out there so that people use the infrastructure in the best way."

Details

When to go

Essex County is a fairly temperate region, so you'll find good cycling conditions from May to October. We were there in August and it was hot, but the large number of shaded trails and tons of swimming options made the heat manageable. Steer clear of visiting on the August long weekend, when Leamington hosts hundreds of Harley-Davidson riders for the annual Hogs for Hospice fundraiser. It's a sight to behold, but makes getting around—and getting to sleep—a bit of a slog.

How to get there and get around

The best way into the county is by car. You can also fly into the Windsor airport. If Pelee Island is on your itinerary, make sure you check the Point Pelee ferry schedule (*ontarioferries.com*), time your trip—there aren't that many crossings—and buy your tickets in advance.

Where to stay

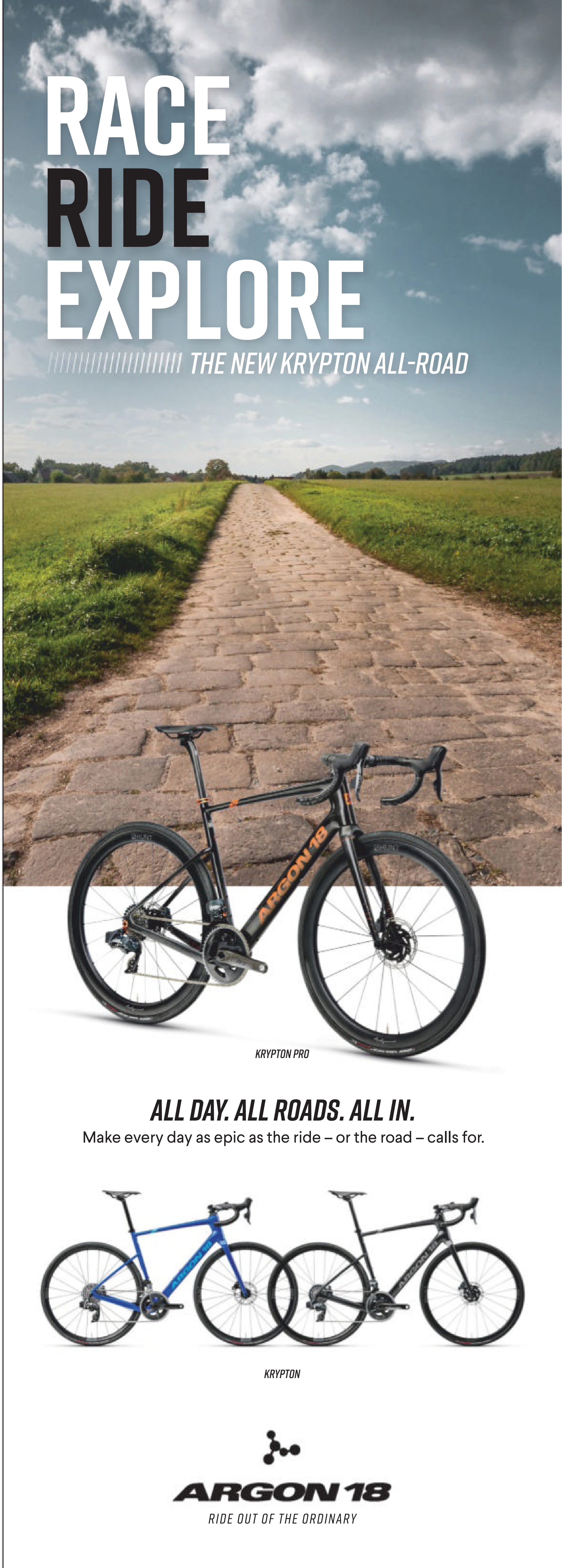
Kingsville makes for a central and accessible home base. The Grove Hotel (*mygrovehotel.com*) is a lovely boutique spot on the main drag with themed rooms and a great front porch where you can sit in rocking chairs and watch people go by. You'll find the usual mid-range hotel chain options in Leamington and Windsor. AirBnBs abound throughout the county.

Where to eat and drink

There's no shortage of eating and drinking options here: Muscedere Vineyards (*muscederevineyards.com*) has delicious brick-oven pizza and a nice rosé. Oxley Estate Winery (*oxleyestatewinery.com*) serves up a nice Lake Erie perch dish and has live music on summer Sunday afternoons. There are too many ice cream spots to name, but Slinky's in Windsor was fun (*slinkys.ca*). The Grove Brewing Company in Kingsville (*mygrovebrewhouse.com*), as well as the Chapter Two Brewing Company (*chaptertwobrewing.com*) and Walkerville Brewery (*walkervillebrewery.com*) in Windsor are all excellent choices. Don't miss the Windsor-style pizza at Antonino's (*originalpizza.ca*) or Armando's (*armandospizza.ca*). And don't leave before trying some of the delicious Central and South American eateries in Leamington.

What to do off the bike

You can hike, birdwatch or paddle in Point Pelee National Park (*parks.canada.ca*) or rent a kayak or SUP at Urban Surf on Lake St. Clair (*urbansurf.ca*). Make the most of the bountiful beaches. Kingsville hosts Open Streets every Saturday in the summer. Or hit up some shops in Walkerville.



3 Nutrients You Need More Of

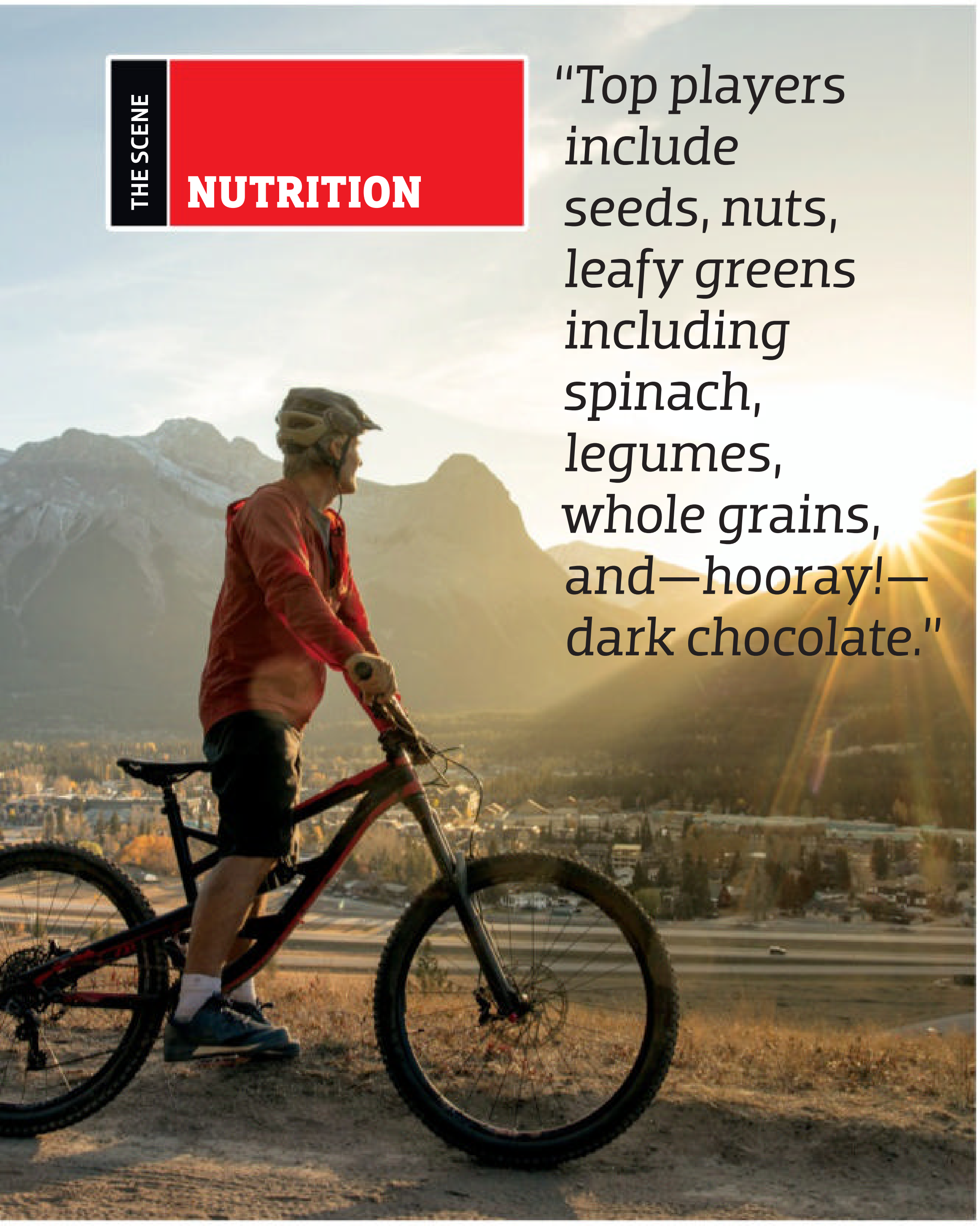
Increase your intake to give your health, and your on-bike performance, a boost

by **Matthew Kadey**

Ask any health-conscious cyclist about nutrition and chances are they will be fairly confident they are meeting all of their nutrient needs, even if they aren't certain what selenium is and where the heck you can find choline in the supermarket. But nutritional shortcomings can be quite common. Even healthy diets may leave a few gaps.

If you ride a lot and eat a lot to fuel that physical activity, you'll naturally get more nutrition from your diet. The volume of food, however, doesn't necessarily mean you are getting all the nutrients you need. Research shows that many Canadians are lacking in a handful of essential items that could be jeopardizing long-term health and performance in the saddle.

Here are three of the biggest weak links in many of our diets, and the best ways for getting back on track with your nutrition.



THE SCENE

NUTRITION

> "Top players include seeds, nuts, leafy greens including spinach, legumes, whole grains, and—hooray!—dark chocolate."

Fibre

Recent dietary survey data suggests that fewer than 25 per cent of Canadian adults are consuming the recommended amount of fibre daily—25 g for men and 38 g for women. That makes it one of the biggest nutritional shortcomings in the country. Beyond the poo-inducing powers, fibre is wildly important to your health, as it can lower the risk for certain chronic diseases. In a recent large-study review published in *Lancet*, researchers determined that if 1,000 people transitioned from a low-fibre diet (less than 15 g per day) to a diet with higher amounts (25 to 29 g per day), the change would prevent 13 deaths and six cases of heart disease. One of the biggest health-hiking powers of fibre resides in its ability to improve blood-sugar control and cholesterol numbers, as well as to increase feelings of satiety to help regulate calorie intake. Getting enough fibre is also important for upping the diversity of beneficial bacteria in your gut microbiome. The truth is, fibre is more of a nutrient for your microbiome than for you. Fibre serves as a type of fuel for the micro-organisms in your digestive tract, allowing them to flourish and, in turn, to produce compounds that can provide a range of health benefits including improving brain and immune functioning.

Get what you need

Plants—lots and lots of plants. Including more plant-based whole foods in your meals and snacks will make it much easier to reach your daily requirement. Reach for legumes, whole grains, fruit (but not fruit juice), vegetables, seeds and nuts. Beans and lentils are a very cost-effective way to bolster intake as they are especially high in fibre and also deliver some plant-based protein.

Need to know

If you haven't been eating much fibre, going big on the nutrient can cause stomach woes, such as bloating. Ramp up your intake slowly.

Vitamin D

If you happen to be getting enough vitamin D, you are an outlier. According to research in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* more than 94 per cent of Canadians are taking in insufficient amounts of this vital nutrient, which means they don't have enough of it in their bodies. You may know that vitamin D plays an important role in building and maintaining strong bones, but its impact on our health and exercise performance is much more extensive. Its association with lowering the chances of developing certain chronic conditions, including heart disease and some cancers, is likely why overcoming a deficiency and maintaining adequate vitamin D status appears to lower the risk for premature death. Recent research even suggests vitamin D may play a role in boosting your rides by improving exercise capacity (increasing VO2 max) and muscular strength. These performance gains, however, are likely the result of taking care of a deficiency.

Get what you need

Dietary sources are fairly limited, but consuming vitamin D-containing fatty fish—such as salmon and sardines—egg yolks, mushrooms that have been exposed to ultraviolet rays and fortified foods, including dairy and plant-based milk, will help boost levels. Still, it's a big challenge to get enough from food alone. When possible, sensible sun exposure (five to 30 minutes of exposure to unprotected body parts several times a week) is a great help as vitamin D is produced endogenously when UV rays from sunlight strike the skin and trigger vitamin D synthesis. For many people, especially when sunlight is limited and few vitamin D-containing foods are consumed, supplementation with 1,000 to 2,000 international units (IU) daily is a smart move.

Need to know

Consume a supplement with a large meal that contains some fat as research shows this combination improves the absorption of fat-soluble vitamin D. It appears that vitamin D3 is more effective at raising your levels than vitamin D2.

Magnesium

Analysis of dietary data shows that magnesium is another micronutrient that many Canadians are falling short in. Generally, if you are eating a lot of highly processed foods, you aren't going to find a lot of magnesium in them. While a clinical magnesium deficiency is pretty rare, having suboptimal levels resulting from poor intake can be problematic. Magnesium—which is primarily found in bone, muscle, soft tissue and bodily fluids—is important for a whole host of functions in the body, including muscle and nerve functioning, bone formation, protein synthesis, blood pressure regulation and even converting vitamin D to its more active form. Magnesium drives more than 300 crucial enzyme reactions in our bodies. Researchers reported in the journal *Nutrients* that individuals who had a lower concentration of blood magnesium had a greater risk for Type 2 diabetes and incident insulin resistance compared with those who had normal levels of magnesium in their blood. So, it's not a nutrient we should brush off.

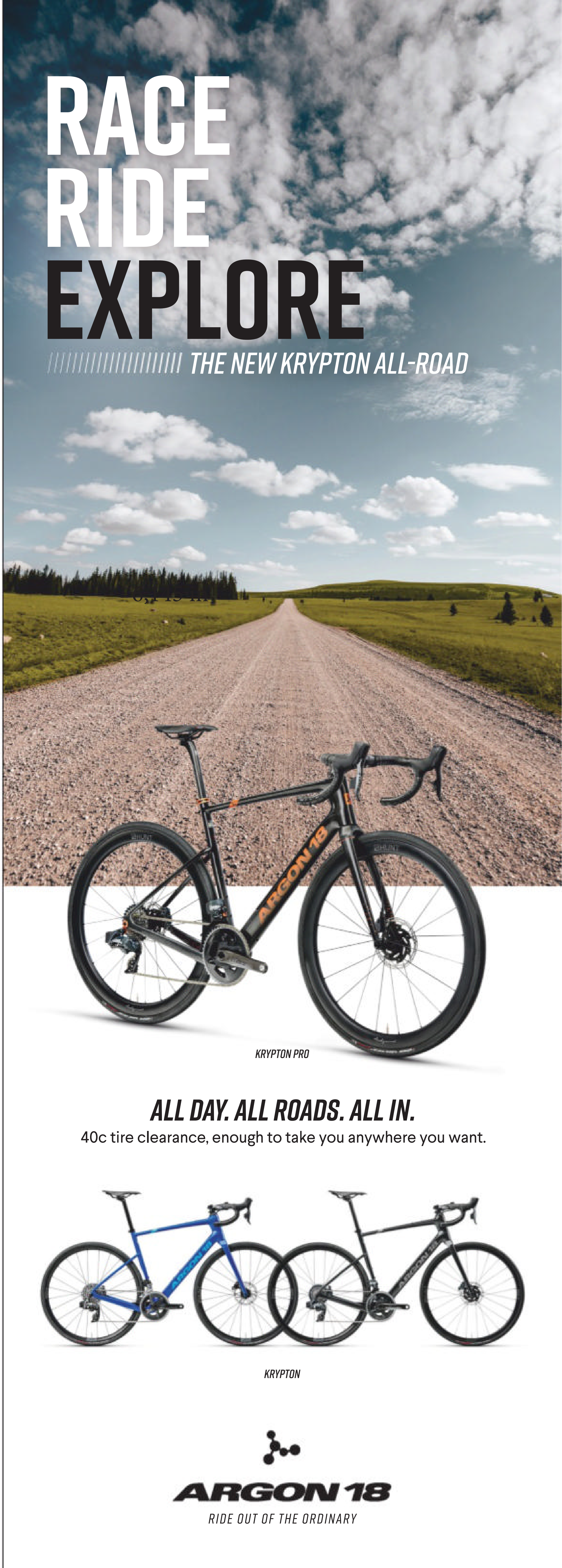
Get what you need

As a general eating pattern, consuming plenty of less-processed plant-based foods will give you the necessary daily dose of magnesium. Top players include seeds, nuts, leafy greens including spinach, legumes, whole grains, and—hooray!—dark chocolate. In general, foods that contain fibre also provide magnesium: a win-win. There is also some magnesium in certain species of fish, including salmon and halibut, as well as yogurt. If you take a multivitamin, there will likely be some magnesium in there to help with your daily needs.

Need to know

As with sodium, some magnesium is lost in the sweat generated during exercise. So if you are Zwifting up a storm, you may need a little more in your diet to cover losses. But consuming magnesium during exercise has not yet proven to be beneficial.

Matthew Kadey is a registered dietician and the designer of Ontario's BT 700 bikepacking route.



Doug Wagner's

Honey Butter Sauce

Photo: Courtesy Doug Wagner

by **Melanie Chambers**

Dirtbags. Mountain bikers wearing shabby thrift-store finds, but whose bikes are pristine machines. They live to ride. It's these fun-loving, unpretentious customers who inspire chef Doug Wagner's cuisine at the Fire Hall Kitchen and Tap in Cranbrook, B.C.

"It's not about being dirt poor, but making do with what you have. These riders have nice frames with used parts and they're faster than us. They make it work and I love their style," Wagner says.

He also loves hitting the drops himself, but lately, his body doesn't. He sold his downhill bike a few years ago and now is riding a Banshee Prime V2. "It's amazing what you can do on a six-inch enduro bike at the silver stage of life," he says.

The dirtbag ethos also extends to his cuisine: common food, done well. A good example is his hobo fried chicken sandwich with peanut butter, housemade habanero sauce, pickles, honey butter sauce and crispy onion tangles. His honey butter is a do-it-all sauce. "My favourite pairing is just with fresh baked bread."

Not formally trained as a chef, Wagner got started in the restaurant business washing dishes at 14. On his first day after work, he also got a free meal: "Wait, you're going to pay me and I get a free sandwich?" He was hooked.

Afterwards, he invested in a pizzeria near a gear-exchange store called Funhogz where he bought his first real mountain bike—a 2003 Brodie Bruzza. Then, he worked as a resort chef at St. Eugene, before becoming part of the Fire Hall team in 2018.

While he works long hours on his feet, he still squeezes rides into his schedule, often in the early morning or at night. "It helps keep you balanced when you're surrounded by beer and burgers all day," he says.

> *"My favourite pairing is just with fresh baked bread."*

Nutritional Information

For one serving	
Calories	79
Carbs	14.2 g
Saturated Fat	1.6 g
Fibre	0.2 g
Protein	0.6 g

Serves 26

Ingredients

olive oil
salt and pepper
5 garlic heads (or **2–3 tbsp** garlic powder)
1 cup (250 g) golden honey
70 g (roughly 1 stick) butter, cubed
2 tbsp red hot sauce

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
2. For each head of garlic, peel off the papery outer layers and trim the tops to reveal each clove.
3. Drizzle olive oil over each garlic head and sprinkle it with salt and pepper.
4. Wrap each head in foil and place on a baking sheet. Bake for 30–40 minutes, until the cloves are lightly browned and soft.
5. Combine honey and butter in a food processor. If you don't have a processor, soften the butter to room temperature, and then whisk in the honey slowly.
6. Mix in the hot sauce and roasted cloves slowly.

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The Rush of the First Big Gear Upgrade

Nothing ever spins so well as new-to-you carbon wheels

by **Bart Egnal**

My **first road bike** was a Specialized Tarmac Comp with huge double wrapped handlebars (width 48 cm!), a Shimano 105 group and a steerer tube stack higher than a double order of pancakes at the Golden Griddle. My first few rides were spent riding slowly around bike paths, baffled that anyone rode more than 45 minutes. I was often decked out in the rainbow jersey I'd bought on ProBikeKit, paired, naturally, with a Movistar bib short. I was blissfully unaware of cycling fashion rules, or of the fact that my super expensive (to me) bike was viewed in our industry as barely one step up from entry-level.

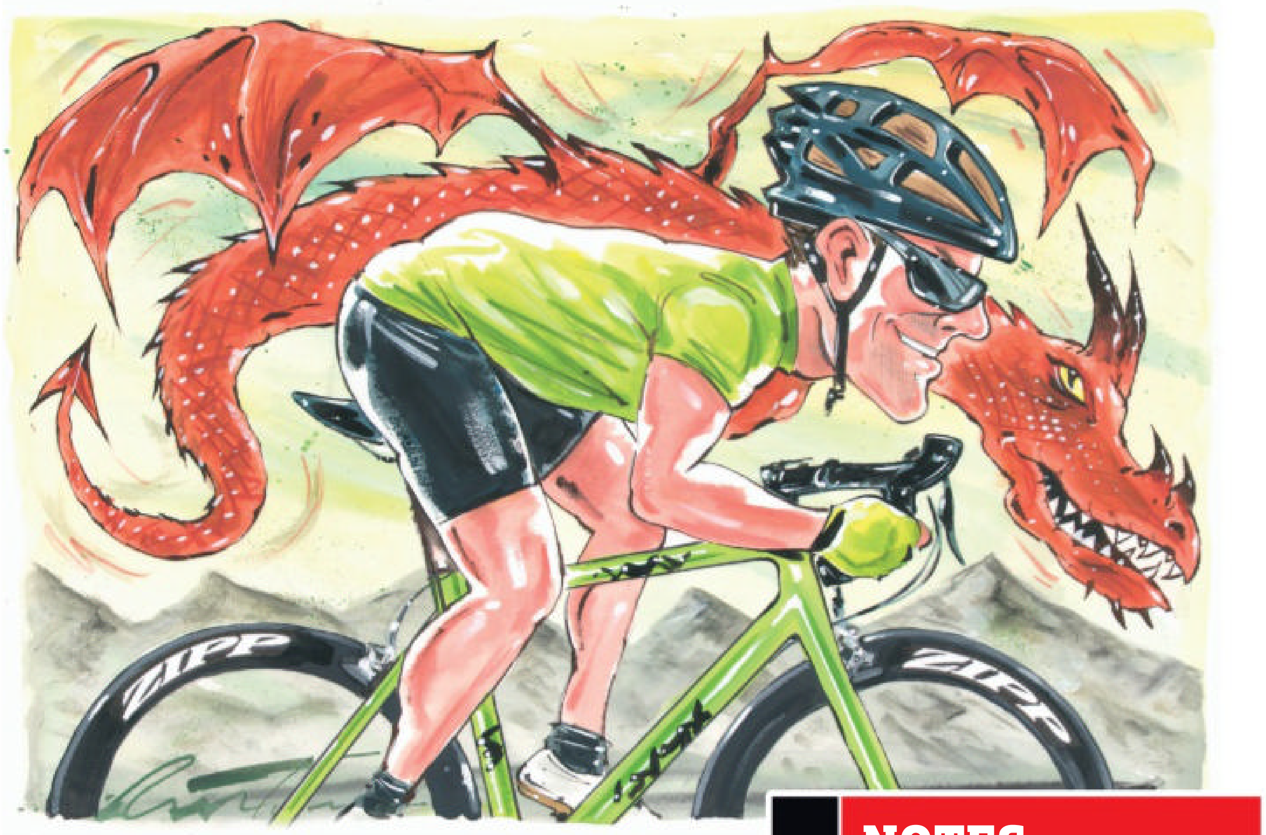

Image: Russ Tudor

Then I made two discoveries that had lasting implications on my bank account. The first was that this new company called Rapha was making some cool cycling kit. The second was that you could *buy things that would actually make you faster*.

I made the second discovery as I started to read about cycling, watch the racers in my club and listen to the sounds their bikes made. Within a year I'd made a critical realization: it was time to get some new wheels. The bulletproof, yet brick-like, wheels that my bike came with could ride over any cattle guard. The tires seemed to be impervious to flats. The whole setup could likely serve as a weapon should I be attacked by roving bike thieves. But when I compared the wheels to the fancy new carbon clincher hoops that the cool kids were rocking, I felt like it was time for a breakup. It wasn't just how killer deep-rim wheels looked; it was how they sounded—the whirr of the freehub, the whooshing sound they seemed to make at high speeds. It was all so enticing.

But I didn't just want to buy them. I wanted to earn them. So I set myself an incredibly ambitious goal: I would get them only after my rides added up to the epic distance of—wait for it—1,000 km. You know, the distance many of us cover in a few weeks in the summer.

THE SCENE

NOTES FROM THE GRUPPETTO

> "The joy of a monumental increase in pedalling efficiency, aerodynamics and coolness made the (also monumental) outlay of cash all worthwhile."

When I revealed my plan to my friends Dave and Morgan, both accomplished racers, it was all they could do to keep straight faces. But to their credit, they supported me in my epic quest, which took roughly four months. Then the day came: I put a brand new pair of Zipp 404 Firecrest wheels on the bike. I have to say, the upgrade was spectacular. The bike was dramatically faster, of course, but let's get real, it was the flex when you show up on the group ride with new wheels that made it all worthwhile. "Nice wheels" was the music that played in my ears over and over. And the freehub…it was love.

A year later, I gave the wheels a bike they deserved. Out went my entry-level bike and in came a full carbon aero machine with a Shimano Di2 groupset. I picked it up and immediately rode over the Cambie Bridge, somehow claiming a Strava KOM that I then held for years. Again, the joy of a monumental increase in pedalling efficiency, aerodynamics and coolness made the (also monumental) outlay of cash all worthwhile.

That was nearly 10 years ago. Since then, I've bought bikes I've lusted after, bikes that were apex predators and works of art. I can honestly say I have never had the kind of improvement I got from that first set of wheels and first high-end bike upgrade. After that, I've been nibbling at the edges, despite being told by the bike brands that each subsequent purchase is "25 W faster" (at 50 km/h) or "30 per cent stiffer" or "guaranteed to be the ultimate group ride kudo magnet." (OK, that last one has never been promised to me.) The fact is it's never the kind of change it was at first. When you've been riding for a while, new bike purchases are like chasing the dragon, trying to replicate the buzz (not just the one from the freehub) you got so many years ago.

The fact is, I'm sanguine about the reality that I'm getting older and slower. No new bike can overcome that. But will I stop buying new bikes, shoes, wheels, helmets? For sure. Just after I buy the new one coming out before the Tour this summer. It looks so good. And it promises to make me five per cent faster. Really.

HUNT BROTHERS PIZZA
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RIDE SATURDAY?

"Within a day's ride," is something of a moving target; fitness, time, and weather are perpetual variables. At home in Athens, Georgia for the winter, Jered and Ashley Gruber saw Asheville peeking out at them from the edge of a day's ride, 300km away. Jumping between mapping software and group texts, the best bad idea began to take shape.

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Warning: This Article Could Make You Move to the Soo

Once you read about the riding and quality of life in Sault Ste. Marie, you'll want to relocate to that city, just like one of our readers did

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SAULT STE. MARIE, ONT.

by **Cheryl MacLachlan**

"I**'ve always dreamed** about living closer to nature," says Chris Sanger. The teacher based in Mississauga, Ont., had been looking west to British Columbia, but found the costs of such a move were too much. Instead, he discovered what he calls the "Squamish of Ontario" to the north in Sault Ste. Marie, where he and his family now live and ride.

Sanger actually found out about the cycling, hiking and skiing playground that is the Soo in the pages of this magazine. The city wasn't even on his radar until he came across the *Canadian Cycling Magazine* story in 2022. As Sanger continued his research, he could see the city had a relatively low cost of living. He was impressed by the number of women and kids he saw at riding events via social media and by the close proximity of trails. Once he and his family made the move later in the year, he was drawn into the strong cycling community "People are approachable and really want you to know about each cool little secret riding spot that you should check out," Sanger says. "The community here is tight-knit and welcoming."

Sanger rides XC and gravel, too. This year, he plans to enter some enduro events across the border in Marquette, Mich. In southern Ontario, he never gave much thought to fat bikes. "Here, I need one. The fat bike community is huge," he says. "So I bought one and ride it everyday as my commuter." Both Sanger's wife, Simrit Gill, and his eight-year-old daughter Ria take to the trails. In fact, Ria likes to watch XC events with her dad and thinks it's important that you know she met her favourite rider, Jolanda Neff, at the World Cup in Mont-Sainte-Anne last year. While the cycling and access to nature is key, the city is letting the family flourish in other parts of their lives. Chris continues to teach at the high school level, mostly in woodshop. Simrit has a job at Algoma University as an executive assistant. She, however, has also found she now has the time to also pursue her dream of becoming a habit coach.

People new to Sault Ste. Marie are not the only ones learning how great the place is. Folks returning to the city are rediscovering just how good they had it. "Like many Saulites, after high school, I moved to southern Ontario for school," says Erin Ratelle. "At the time, I think I took for granted some of the great things the Soo had to offer." (It's a refrain Sanger has also heard from other returning locals.) The pandemic and remote work lead Ratelle back to her hometown. "My partner and I quickly became involved with the cycling community," she says. "Everyone is so incredibly welcoming. We're both from here, and yet we've made great new friends within the outdoor community since moving home. It's been a big factor in us choosing to stay in the Soo. Where else can I be a 30-minute drive to beautiful lakes or a 10-minute drive to some of the best hiking, cycling and ski trails in Ontario?"

The cycling community is well-established. It includes shops, such as the Algoma Bicycle Company, Vélorution Bike & Ski and Duke of Windsor Sports. The Sault Cycling Club organizes events in all disciplines, puts on kids'

Photos: Colin Field

> *"People are approachable and really want you to know about each cool little secret riding spot that you should check out."*

mountain bike programming, builds and maintains trails, grooms fat bike trails and does advocacy work. New tours, races and rides keep popping up on the calendar. Multiple local touring companies organize cycling adventures. There are also the folks who have been building trails and growing the sport in the region for years.

"There is a really robust cycling community in Sault Ste. Marie, particularly for a small city," Ratelle says. "There's only around 75,000 people who live here but, for example, on any given Tuesday in the summer there will be 50 to 80 women at Vélorution's Titty Tuesday mountain bike ride, which is super fun whether it's your first time on a mountain bike or you want to go out and shred."

The city, nestled between Lake Huron and Lake Superior on St. Mary's River, provides easy access to scenic road and gravel riding and to a growing list of trails for mountain and fat biking. "I own a gravel bike," Sanger says, "but haven't got it off the trainer yet. But when I do, I know there are a ton of gravel roads here to explore." For mountain biking, the trails of the Hiawatha Highlands are within a 10-minute drive of the city, or six minutes from Sanger's house. Bellevue Valley, about 20-minutes away, is his favourite spot to ride. In-town, cyclists with slicker tires use the 25-km paved multi-use John Rowswell Hub Trail.

Millions of dollars in cycling investments will continue this year with the goal of establishing Sault Ste. Marie as a premier biking destination. With developments such as more groomed fat biking trails, a 10-km extension of the Farmer Lake Trail system, a new pump track and a 3-km flow trail that will link up with the urban Hub Trail, options and access keep growing.

HIAWATHA HIGHLANDS MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

As for Sanger and his family, they continue to enjoy all their new home has to offer, thoroughly. "As of January, we'd only lived here five months and we'd ridden almost weekly," he says. "Even with snow upon us, the riding hadn't slowed down."

Want to head to the Soo? Check out *WelcomeToSSM.com* for tons of resources, from job listings to what's happening in town. Also check out *SaultTourism.com* for more info on trail networks, the best cycling spots and other outdoor adventures.

Photo: Rob Jones

TRAINING

TRAINING TIPS

Get Prepared for an Early Season Gravel Event

Advice from a Paris to Ancaster race winner

by **Michael van den Ham**

Even though gravel races are already underway south of the border, the season hasn't yet started here in Canada. This year, it does get going with a bang as Ontario's Paris to Ancaster, at the end of April, will be our first gravel national championship event. With that in mind, here are a few tips to have you as prepared as possible for P2A or any other early season gravel race.

Make a plan

Whether you hire a coach, download a training plan or devise your own training schedule, you need a way to set out a program. If you don't have a plan to keep you on track, you won't be able to achieve your best performance. Without some sort of guidance, even the most experienced athletes are prone to missteps, such as doing too much intensity and forgetting to rest. So plan, train, and then adjust accordingly as the inevitable push-pull of work, life and riding plays out.

Get outside, even if means getting off the bike

In the age of direct-drive trainers, Zwift and all those other amazing indoor training tools, it's easy to spend the entire winter without turning a pedal outside. But, if you completely avoid the open air, you miss out on some of the valuable benefits of getting outside to train

Remember that gravel is an outdoor sport on unpaved roads. Riding inside may be able to prepare you for the physiological aspects of the sport, but it can't prepare you for the technical parts. There is no better way to improve your bike handling than by actually getting out and riding on the slippery, muddy, uneven and rough terrain that you'll probably be seeing in those early season races.

Even if it's only once or twice per week, you get great psychological benefits by spending time outside in nature. Winter, especially in Canada, can be tough for a lot of people. Making the time to enjoy the landscape can be one way to improve your general well-being. For this reason, I usually give my clients one workout per weekend that's a simple directive: get outside. A hike, walk, ski, run or snowshoe will do the trick. Don't stress if the activity is not on two wheels. The boost you get by being outdoors more than makes up for being off-bike.

Start practising your nutrition

If you've been riding outdoors in the cold or spending time on the trainer, there is a good chance you've been underfuelling for months. It can be hard to eat when you have lobster-claw gloves on. Also, you often don't feel like you need to fuel when it's cold or you are on a short indoor session. It doesn't matter, however, how much training you've done all winter if you run out or carbohydrate stores a couple hours into a race and succumb to the dreaded bonk.

It's essential to have a nutrition plan specific to your target event. How many carbohydrates you need to consume per hour is different for every person. It depends on the power you produce and what your gut can tolerate. Still, you should aim for between 60–90 g of carbohydrates per hour of racing. That amount will make sure you have enough fuel to finish strong.

That said, fuelling is not just about having a nutrition plan for the race, it's also about putting that plan into practice while training. This fuel training gets you used to eating regularly on the bike, and also can provide really valuable insight into what works and doesn't work for you.

Michael van den Ham is a professional cyclocross and gravel racer. He has been a coach with Cycle-Smart for the past eight years.

> *"I usually give my clients one workout per weekend that's a simple directive: get outside."*

OPPOSITE
Michael van den Ham races Paris to Ancaster 2022

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Mastering Action Camera Video with Danny MacAskill

Tips from the trials riding star that will make your recorded rides look as rad as they feel

by **Steve Thomas**

Point of view mountain bike videos can take you on some inspiring, and terrifying, rides. Your rips on a bike might not be as jaw-dropping as those of Danny MacAskill, but if you have your action camera on, you still want the footage to look good. You can raise your POV video game to the next level with the right approaches and by nailing the settings on your action camera.

> "Have a rider in front of you. It makes the POV footage more interesting."

Headfirst or from the chest?

Video shot from atop your helmet or from a chest mount—which footage looks best? MacAskill shoots both, but he has one that he prefers. "My favourite angle and mount for my GoPro is the chest mount," he says. "I often run the camera upside down. It means that when you're bent over, especially on steep trails, you get the right angle." You do need to have that chest plate strapped tightly in order to keep it from flopping around.

Remember, you change your position depending on the terrain, so you have to factor in how the landscape will affect your shots. "Advice that I never follow myself, but should, is to go out and do a bit of testing, and then try to remember what works best. I should note the degree of the camera's angle: push it right back against the mount, and then turn it by a certain amount, and remember that increment."

Go wide or go home disappointed

Most action cameras offer various fields of view. A wide field of view lets you capture more of what you see in front of you. The drawback, however, is that you get more of a fisheye effect the wider you go. Still, MacAskill recommends going large. "The biggest thing is to always go for the widest angle option on the camera as it gives you more resolution for when you crop in later," he says. "It also means that you're more likely to get the shot you want."

Stabilization and subjects

Current cameras have great built-in stabilization. Part of the stabilization comes from cropping that the camera does automatically. Often a stabilization feature comes with its own settings. On a GoPro, boost mode is the maximum cropping you can get. "I use the boost mode, as well as the horizon lock," MacAskill says. "In good light, it's insane these days just how crisp the horizon and riders in front of you are. And that's another good tip: have a rider in front of you. It makes the POV footage more interesting, and so I quite like following people."

The settings that work for MacAskill

Putting your camera to full auto mode is rarely a wise move, especially as the lighting conditions can change quickly on the go. You need to be diligent with the ISO setting, which controls the camera's sensitivity to light. "I always limit my ISO. The minimum is 100 and maximum is 1600. That's the important one as it will allow the shutter to work, otherwise things can get strange, especially under trees. I have the bitrate set to high, shutter speed on auto, sharpness at medium (as it can be a bit too sharp) and colour to normal," he says.

"On my GoPro10, I run a 4:3 ratio at 4K. Quite often, I use 25 frames per second as it saves a bit of memory. If you're doing regular trail riding, the files soon rack up and fill the memory card.

On the new GoPro11, I run the 8:7 tall ratio at 4K, which means that I can slice the footage for vertical video. Quite often, you want good quality vertical clips for a smartphone." ©

DROP AND ROLL

RIGHT
Danny MacAskill

Photos: Uncredited, Steve Thomas

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Carry With Care

How to outfit your bike properly with racks and bags

by **Nick Di Cristofaro**

So you and your bike are ready for an epic adventure, eh? Maybe it's an attempt at a big distance, a cross-country trek or just a commute to work. Often in these cases, your jersey pockets won't offer enough storage for your needs. To carry more stuff, there are a few options and many ways to attach them to your bicycle.

Rear racks

When you have a rear rack as a solid platform, you can add panniers and other types of accessories to the tubing of the rack. Just make sure that whatever you are adding is compatible with the tube size of your particular setup. Like bicycles, racks are available in many varieties.

A bike frame with built-in mounts is by far the best and most secure way of attaching a rack as it will simply bolt onto threaded eyelets in the bike's tubes. If, for example, you have a road bike without mounts, you'll have to source a compatible rack. It might connect near the rear dropouts via an extra long quick-release axle. The upper mounts might get attached to the seatstays with straps or clamps, to the seatpost with a clamp or to a seatpost clamp with built-in eyelets. Clamps will be able to carry more load than straps, so make sure you determine how much weight you want to carry. If you have a frame with non-round seatstays and seatpost, you might need to make further adjustments. If you have disc brakes, choose a rack that clears the rear caliper.

Bags

There are also myriad bags that you can attach to your bike: handlebar, seat, frame and top-tube bags. If you forgo a rack, generally, you can use a larger seat bag, which carries 9 to 16 l of stuff. These are better for lighter weight and bulker items, such as a sleeping bag or extra rain gear. When you are looking at frame bags, I recommend you get one with ample padding, especially where it comes in contact with the frame. The cushioning can prevent abrasion by items that move around inside the bag.

Be wary of wear

If you don't prepare your frame properly, bags and some rack clamps can cause damage. Most rack-strapping systems will come with some sort of padded protection for you to apply to the frame before you install the clamps or straps. No matter what, those areas of the frame will still see some scuffing, so take this into account before using a bike with a delicate paint finish you'd like to keep pristine.

Bags mostly secure to a bike with hook-and-loop straps or belt-like rubber straps (think Voilé straps). On a bumpy bikepacking trip, it doesn't take long before you might see some catastrophic damage at these attachment points. Some straps can actually rub through carbon fibre.

Always tape any area of the frame where the straps and bags will come in contact with the bike. One of the best products is good ol' electrical tape, which can be cut to shape, is easily removable and leaves minimal residue. Avoid duct tape, packing tape or Gorilla tape. They have adhesives that can leave a nasty residue. Gorilla tape is so strong that it could even remove paint if it's left on long enough. For the best protection, consider a bike-specific frame kit or tape. Some kits even have pieces that protect parts of the frame from road or trail debris.

When you cinch down straps, keep them as loose as possible while still keeping the bag secure. Loose straps generally make for less wear.

Finally, always inspect your cable housing and brake hose routing after installing any sort of bag, especially at the handlebar. A bag might change how these conduits articulate to the frame or levers. When you turn the bar, the cables or hoses might get kinked. Do add tape to the head tube or any area where hose or housing might be pressed against the frame.

Now, with your bags secure and your bike protected, you're sure to go far.

Nick Di Cristofaro is a veteran bike mechanic and the service manager at Forza Performance.

> *"In this case, one of the best products is good ol' electrical tape."*

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9 PIECES OF FINANCIAL ADVICE THAT CAN IMPROVE YOUR CYCLING

BUDGETING YOUR WORKOUTS, COMPOUNDING YOUR TRAINING GAINS AND DIVERSIFYING YOUR ACTIVITIES—WISDOM THAT CAN BUILD YOUR PORTFOLIO CAN ALSO BOOST YOUR POWER OUTPUT

by **Molly Hurford**

We often talk about how sport is a metaphor for life, but can parts of your life be metaphors for sport? Earlier this year, I was talking to my financial advisor and just before my eyes glazed over, I heard him say something about diversifying assets. Now, I don't claim to be a financial expert, but as someone who's been championing cross-training as critically important for cyclists, the idea of diversifying assets had me snapping to attention. Maybe I understood my finances better than I thought! (Probably not.) Rather than considering my strategies for investing in crypto versus real estate, though, I decided it would be much more fun to dig into oft-cited investment advice to see how closely it matched with smart training. It turns out, what's good for your retirement fund might also be good for your race results.

1

Know Where Your Money Is Going

"WITHOUT A PLAN, YOU'RE FLOATING AND STUMBLING, HOPING LIFE WILL SOMEDAY CLICK INTO PLACE."—
JESSE MECHAM IN *YOU NEED A BUDGET*

Here, I'm not talking about the money you spend on a subscription to Whoop or Zwift—I'm talking about an honest accounting of your training time and what you're doing during those workouts and rides. (Though it may also be a good idea to assess how much you're spending on bike gear...but I'll never tell you that you don't need that new wheelset.)

Seriously, though, I'm talking about training time and what you're doing with it. It's hard to set a goal of improving your time at the local gravel grinder if you have no idea what you're actually doing for training right now. So, whether you record your workouts in an app, a spreadsheet or a notebook, start keeping track of what you're doing. And once you have that...

2

Yes, You Need a Budget

“A BUDGET IS MORE THAN JUST A SERIES OF NUMBERS ON A PAGE; IT IS AN EMBODIMENT OF OUR VALUES.”—BARACK OBAMA

When it comes to training, longtime cycling coach Peter Glassford often notices that new clients have a goal/training mismatch. They have a big goal like a mountain bike stage race, but they've been training mostly on Zwift and at local crits on flat roads. If they want to get to that big goal, they're going to need to change the way they budget their training time.

If you're in debt or trying to save for something, a budget can help you reach your goals. If you just want to hit your weekly requirement of exercising four times, or occasionally riding with a few friends on the rail trail, you don't necessarily need a plan. But because you're reading this, I'm guessing you have a big goal in cycling. If you want to finish your first 100 miler, a training plan will get you to the finish line as painlessly as possible.

“It's fine to just exercise and ride for fun if that's all you plan to do," says Angie Ridgel of Stelleri Training. "But you won't see much physiological adaptation—you won't get better. A training plan lets you spend your time wisely, so you get the greatest benefit toward the event that you're focusing on. A training plan holds you accountable, so you're more likely to stick with it compared to just winging it."

3

Live Below (or at Least, Within) Your Means

“FINANCIAL PEACE ISN’T THE ACQUISITION OF STUFF. IT’S LEARNING TO LIVE ON LESS THAN YOU MAKE, SO YOU CAN GIVE MONEY BACK AND HAVE MONEY TO INVEST. YOU CAN’T WIN UNTIL YOU DO THIS.”—DAVE RAMSEY

Finance expert Dave Ramsey famously suggested living at or below your means—and the same applies to training. Just because you can train 25 hours in a week doesn't mean you should. And just because you can get up at 4 a.m. to train despite not going to sleep until 1 a.m. doesn't mean it's a smart long-term solution for your lack of free time for training.

Think of overtraining similarly to going into debt: you're living on borrowed time. If you push too far beyond what your body can recover from, you'll find yourself dealing with illness, injury and rapidly diminishing returns. The same is true for nutrition. If losing weight is a goal, it's tempting to go on a drastic diet while training more—but push your body too far and you'll end up further and further in caloric debt and at risk of relative energy deficiency in sport (RED-S).

"This can be really challenging for many athletes," says Ridgel. "So many of us want to add more training hours, add more intensity, add more volume. But we need that downtime, whether it's a full off-season or just a day off in the week. The recovery time is when your muscles are making adaptations: you're not going to lose fitness, you're going to see results. You can't make progress if you're not resting, but so many athletes are afraid of taking that time off when they could cram in more training hours. But I see the metrics, and when they don't take time off, their performance curve is flat."

4

Focus on Long-term Gains

“WAITING HELPS YOU AS AN INVESTOR AND A LOT OF PEOPLE JUST CAN’T STAND TO WAIT. IF YOU DIDN’T GET THE DEFERRED-GRATIFICATION GENE, YOU’VE GOT TO WORK VERY HARD TO OVERCOME THAT.”—CHARLIE MUNGER, BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY VICE-CHAIRMAN

Welcome to investment strategy 101: the power of compound interest. Usually, we're talking about leaving money in an investment account to compound slowly over time. But here, we're talking about how good and bad training habits can pay off or cost you in big ways.

It's hard to think about our future selves as the actual people who we will become, says Harvard psychologist Dr. Daniel Gilbert. Strength training two times per week now may not seem like fun, or like it's paying off—especially when you'd rather be doing, well, pretty much anything else. But we know that strength training regularly now will pay huge dividends in the future: it leads to better bone density, muscle retention, body composition and hormone health in 20 years.

On the other side, a bad habit like skimping on sleep and getting only five hours per night rather than the recommended seven to nine can cost you. The costs add up the longer you go without fixing your sleep issue. Chronic sleep debt—yep, it's actually called "debt"—leads to a weakened immune system, higher blood pressure and higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

5

Don’t Look Back to See What’s Ahead

“PAST PERFORMANCE IS NO GUARANTEE OF FUTURE RESULTS.”—U.S. SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION DISCLAIMER

Good news and bad news here: you aren't the athlete you were 10 years ago. As a stock may not perform as well today as it did two years ago (GameStop, anyone?), you change over time, too. This doesn't have to be a bad thing—but it is worth being aware of as you continue in your athletic journey.

“I found that as I entered menopause, every day of my life felt a little different," says Lorri Lee Lown, cyclist, founder of Velo Girls and longtime head coach at Savvy Bike. "Some days, I have more anxiety on the bike. I'm fatigued at the end of rides that used to feel easy. But I'm learning that it's all about training within your own current fitness level versus competing with others—even your former self."

You may also need to shift some of your focus: you can still slay downhills on the mountain bike at any age, but adding some strength training and mobility work might help you stay injury-free. You may need to add a bonus recovery day. You can—and should—still be doing those intervals, but don't be surprised if the FTP you held 15 years ago is no longer attainable.

6

Make Sure You Choose the Right News to Focus On

"BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH CHATTER ABOUT MARKETS, THE ECONOMY, INTEREST RATES, PRICE BEHAVIOUR OF STOCKS, ETC., SOME INVESTORS BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO LISTEN TO PUNDITS—AND, WORSE YET, IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER ACTING UPON THEIR COMMENTS."—WARREN BUFFET

Not every fad diet is going to be right for you, just like every hot new investment isn't necessarily a great idea—just look at the FTX crypto debacle in 2022. The same could be said about fasted-state training, keto diets, carnivore diets and pretty much any -ism. Just because it makes headlines doesn't mean it's going to work the way you hope it will.

"There isn't any one silver bullet when it comes to training or nutrition," Glassford says. "We see athletes wanting to try a new supplement or new diet thinking it's the solution to all of their problems, but it's rare that there's a quick fix—and rarer still that the quick fix can be found via Instagram versus at the doctor's office or based on lab testing."

Moral of the story: if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

7

Automate Good Behaviours

"PUT ALL OF YOUR SAVINGS ON AUTOPILOT, AND YOU WON'T LIKELY NOTICE THE MISSING CASH."—JEAN CHATZKY, CEO OF HERMONEY

Automating your healthy habits yields the same benefits as automating monthly bill payments and investments. Little habit tweaks like rolling out of bed and doing a few sun salutations before looking at your email, making sure you're steadily drinking water throughout the day by setting reminders on your phone, or getting a meal-delivery service set up if you know you're trying to eat healthier are all easy ways to automate better, healthy behaviours that will support your training.

Automation can mean simplifying processes. "The more we can automate and make everything around training easier, the easier it is to make the time to actually do the training," Glassford says. If you're regularly riding indoors because of work or weather, have the trainer set up permanently in an ideal spot so you're not constantly spending an added 10 minutes preparing to ride.

And remember: something is better than nothing. When it comes to saving for retirement, the popular advice is that saving something—anything!—is better than nothing. Automating a deposit of $50 into an RRSP monthly will compound over time to net you much, much more than $0 will—even if you think $50 is nothing compared to the $800 you'd hoped to put in this month. The same is true of your training: automate the act of getting on the bike, not necessarily the amount of time you ride. If you have a long ride planned but life gets in the way, a 45-minute spin will still lead to more gains than skipping your workout altogether.

"YOU SHOULD ALSO DIVERSIFY YOUR WORKOUT PORTFOLIO WITHIN YOUR CURRENT CYCLING OBSESSION."

8

Diversify Your Investment Portfolio

“STRUCTURE A CONCENTRATED PORTFOLIO, YET A DIVERSE PORTFOLIO.”—ED WACHENHEIM, INVESTOR

Just like investing in one single stock is rarely a smart idea, training the exact same way day in and day out won't get you very far, either. It often leads to flat fitness or, even worse, potential injury. You should not only look to cross-training to help your fitness to progress, but also to diversify your workout portfolio even with your current cycling obsession.

In terms of your on-bike training, make sure that some days are easy and endurance-based, while others challenge you with a variety of intervals. (See also "Yes, You Need a Budget" above.) If every day is the hardest ride of your life, you'll end up injured. If every day is a 40-minute casual spin, you won't see much improvement. But mix up the two, and you'll start seeing big changes.

Adding in a variety of movement also protects your investment (which is you, you're the investment). Strength training can help you become a more powerful cyclist, while working on mobility can keep you riding comfortably for longer. But even non-cycling activities like running, hiking, walking or even hopping into a game of pick-up basketball with your daughter and her friends can make you a more well-rounded athlete—just beware of diversifying so much that you stop making time for riding.

9

Invest in Yourself First

“THE BEST INVESTMENT BY FAR IS ANYTHING THAT DEVELOPS YOURSELF, AND IT’S NOT TAXED AT ALL.”—WARREN BUFFET

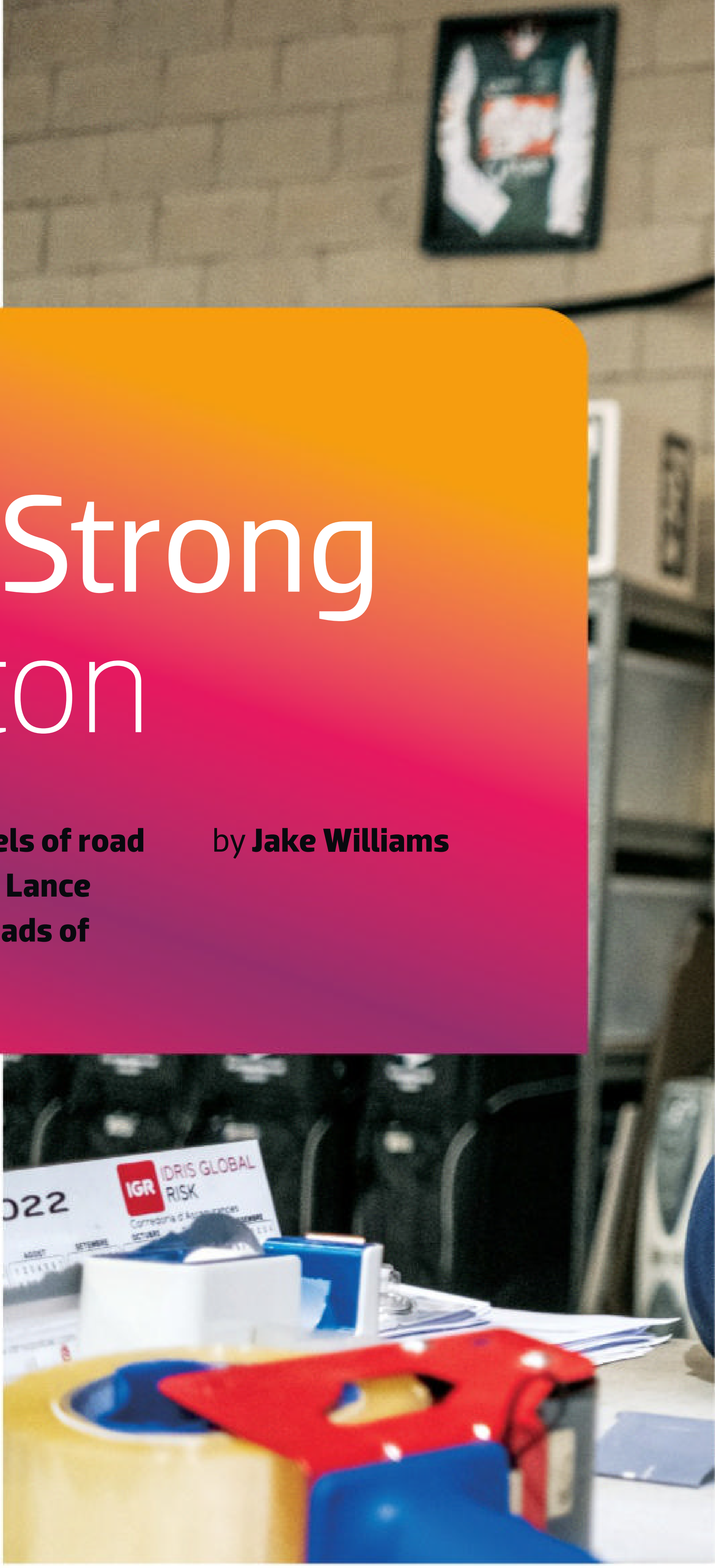
Your health should be your top priority, and that means investing in yourself and your health before investing in a shiny new bike. Catch issues with your health—that niggle in your right knee, that pain in your lower back, that lingering sense of fatigue that won't go away no matter how much sleep you get—before they become big problems.

"As you get older, you can definitely still do big, long races and rides, but you have to dose it appropriately. You can't do back-to-back-to-back stage races and think you're going to stay healthy," says longtime mountain bike coach Lynda Wallenfels. Treat your body well by giving it the training, the nutrition, and the recovery that it needs to meet the goals you want to achieve, and that's going to be the best investment you'll ever make.

45 Grand Tours and Still Going Strong in the Pro Peloton

GEOFF BROWN has been a mechanic at the top levels of road cycling for 30 years. He's worked with many riders—from Lance Armstrong to young Canadians trying to make it on the roads of Europe—and he may very well have seen it all

by **Jake Williams**



Before he was responsible for Lance Armstrong's bike, before a life spent entrenched in team cars on winding European roads, before the 45 Grand Tours, Geoff Brown was an aspiring cyclist growing up in Milton, Ont. The city is now a cycling hub thanks to the Mattamy National Cycling Centre, but it was a different story in the mid-1970s. "At the time there were only two cyclists in the whole town: me and my dad," Brown says with a chuckle.

His father, Ian, raced professionally in Europe throughout the 1950s, and eventually moved his family from England to Canada in the 1960s. Then, an opportunity brought them to Ottawa, where Ian purchased a local bike shop called Ottawa Bikeway.

Brown always dreamed of turning pro, but admittedly didn't have the engine for it. He turned his energy toward his father's shop full-time as a bike mechanic, until one day in 1989. A couple of the guys who worked at the Canadian Cycling Association (CCA) were regulars at the store—and they were looking for help at an upcoming race. With his expenses covered, Brown was on a plane to Martinique and couldn't have been more excited.

"You don't think twice about doing stupid things," Brown recalls of his role at his first race in the Caribbean. Each team manager was assigned a convertible car. Mechanics sat on the back of motorcycles with a set of wheels strapped across their laps and a musette bag full of water bottles. The drivers were from the local racing school and the motorbikes were massive. Some of the other mechanics had close calls and crashed bikes. "Thankfully, all I had to worry about was keeping my underwear clean," Brown says. "After that I was hooked."

Following the racing in Martinique, Brown spent the remainder of the season travelling the eastern U.S. with the national team. In 1990, he headed to Auckland, New Zealand, for the Commonwealth Games. "It hit me, like, this is my life now," says Brown. Throughout the next couple of years, he would still find himself working at his dad's shop in Ottawa, but his heart wasn't in it. "I just wanted to be out at bike races."

Brown's big break came in 1993, with the Motorola Cycling Team, previously 7-Eleven. Ron Hayman, then a national team coach, rode for 7-Eleven. He knew his old squad was looking for mechanics and put in a good word for Brown. Months went by before he finally received a phone call from Noël Dejonckheere, the assistant team manager. After a successful trial at the Tour DuPont, the team mailed Brown a plane ticket and he was off to Europe.

The mechanic recalls arriving at the team's warehouse in Hulste, Belgium, and being awestruck. "It was straight out of the magazines," he says of the neatly organized Eddy Merckx frames, boxes and boxes of Shimano Dura-Ace parts, mountains of tubular tires and brand new Mercedes team cars with logos plastered all over them. It was August. Brown was going to travel from race to race

Photo: Courtesy Human Powered Health

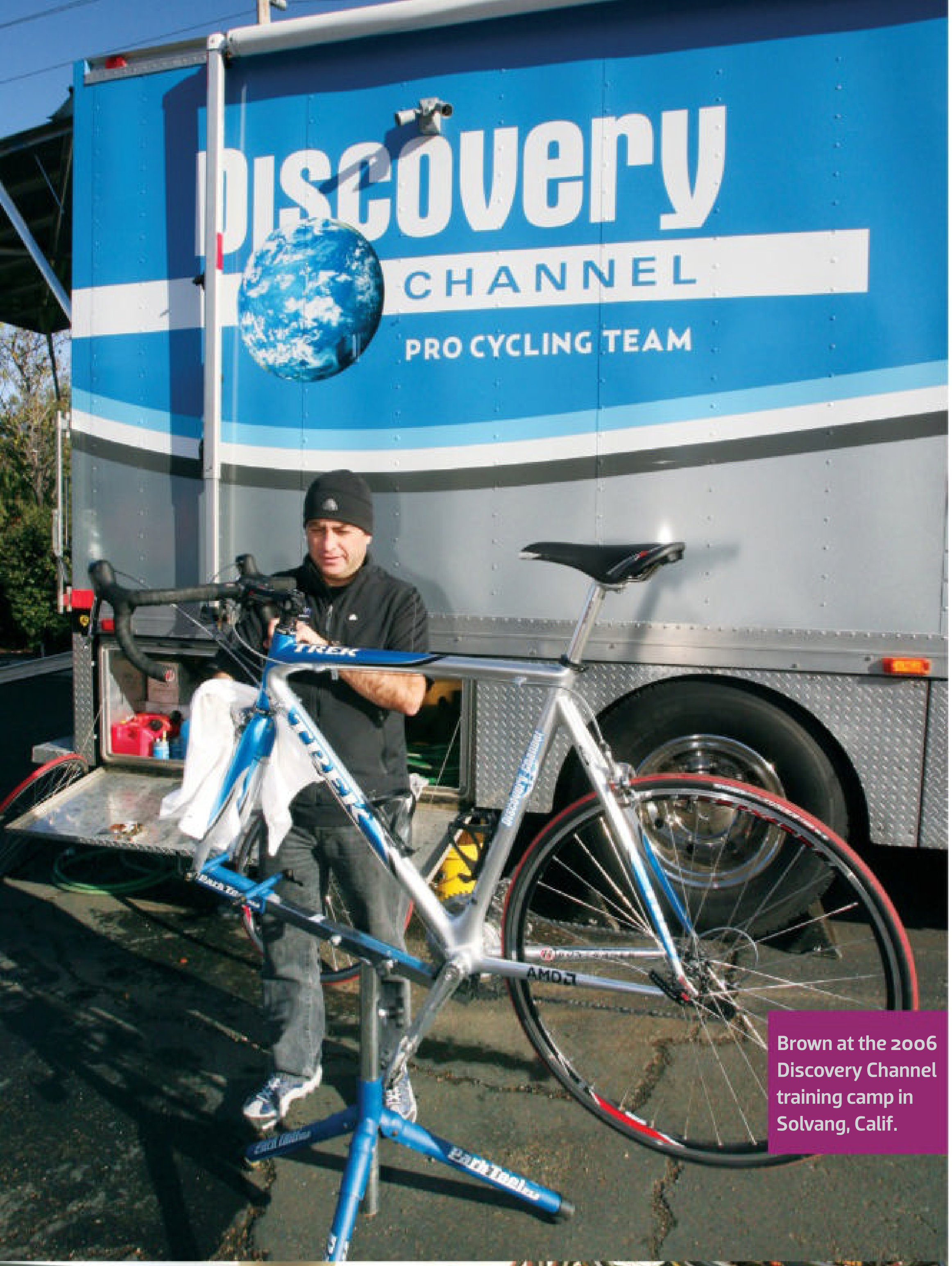
supporting the team. "The guy just handed me a Mercedes key and a stack of cash and said he'd see me in October. That was it, I was gone," Brown says.

Brown spent the next decade working full-time in the professional peloton and living in Belgium. He eventually made his way on to the U.S. Postal Service pro cycling team, where they would go on to have an historic run at the Tour de France. "Until we didn't," Brown says with a laugh, alluding to the now-infamous career of Lance Armstrong. Brown admits Armstrong did bad things. "But not with his bicycle," Brown adds.

Brown recalls the excitement of those years winning in Paris. After the Tour de France, the team would host glamorous parties with celebrity guests. Brown remembers Robin Williams being asked to say a few words in front of the audience. "Well, Robin couldn't just say a few words, he had us under the tables laughing."

During those years, in the weeks before the celebratory nights at the Musée d'Orsay or before rubbing shoulders with the likes of Sheryl Crow, Brown would

> "The guy just handed me a Mercedes key and a stack of cash and said he'd see me in October. That was it, I was gone."



Brown at the 2006 Discovery Channel training camp in Solvang, Calif.

be preparing all of the new and special-edition bikes for the Tour de France at the team's warehouse in Belgium. Brown emphasizes that there was a big push by the sponsors to provide new components before the big race. "It was like Christmas," he says.

Once the race is underway, the first week is always chaos at the Tour. Riders are nervous and crashes are plentiful. He notes that there is also a flurry of repair work—replacing frames, forks and wheels. As the race begins its march through the Pyrenees or Alps, it settles down and days are less frantic. After riding in the caravan during the stage, the support team is back to the hotel to clean and tune the bikes for the next day's action, says Brown.

According to Brown, life in the caravan has gotten easier as teams have added a second director in the cars, leaving one to focus specifically on the driving while the other works with the riders over the radio. "I've been hit by a motorcycle, run over by a car. A team director even took off and left me on the side of the road," he says. Brown remembers having to hitch a ride with another team to get to the finish.

Meanwhile back home in Ottawa, Brown's friends were mystified. "It was still this magical, romantic, far-away world. Geoff kind of disappeared into this magic land," remembers Kevin Field, who raced with Brown in the late 1980s and would go on to work with him at the Canadian professional team Symmetrics in 2007.

As a sports director, Field has relied on the skills of mechanics, but not their wrenching abilities. From their comprehension of race tactics to the athletes and their quirks, mechanics' insights are invaluable for a complete picture of riders. A quick conversation about brake pad and tire wear can say a lot about how well a rider is doing, states Field.

Occasionally, there could be tragedy. In 1995, Brown was on the scene for the death of Motorola rider Fabio Casartelli during Stage 15. "I jump out with a set of wheels. The first thing I see is one of our other mechanics putting Fabio's bike on the roof of the car. The second thing is Fabio's body in the road—then I knew." Brown remembers the somber team meeting after the day's stage and the peloton's tribute to the fallen rider on the next day. "Dealing with death is a different experience for everybody," notes Brown. He'll never forget handing Casartelli his bike at the start line that day.

Throughout the years, Brown's attitude toward his craft never waivered. Ultimately, he strives to serve the athlete. His goal is for the rider to stay focused on the race without worrying about the bike. That being said, some riders chose to be more involved when it comes to their equipment. As do some sponsors.

In 2006, the Discovery Channel pro team was helping Shimano test early versions of Di2. Ten groupsets were installed and ridden on team bikes throughout the winter months in rough conditions. Everything seemed to be going well. When Shimano's engineers visited the service course in Belgium, one rider who had been testing mentioned his calves would occasionally hit the battery. The early groupset featured the battery mounted

Photos: Elizabeth Kreutz

At the 2021 Tour of Britain with Rally Cycling

above the front derailleur. After huddling in serious discussion, the Shimano engineers demanded all groupsets to be returned immediately. "We didn't see Di2 again for at least a year and a half. Nobody did," Brown says.

When it comes to the riders, he recalls Armstrong's meticulous nature when it came to his bike's setup. "We called him Mr. Millimetre," jokes Brown, as Armstrong always had a tape measure to double check his saddle height before the stage.

Not all riders were so particular. All of them, however, travel with their own saddles: what they train on at home, they like to race on, says Brown. Some riders would want to take their race bikes home to do private modifications. The teams would allow it as long as it didn't make the sponsors look bad.

One of those riders who would adjust his own ride was Eric Wohlberg, who raced with the Canadian national team in the early 2000s. He and Brown would cross paths in Europe. "Geoff was always willing to take us less-fortunate riders under his wing, and set us up with some tune-ups here and there. Parts assistance if needed, too. He's so generous, willing to help anyone—but he has a soft spot for us Canadians. That was awesome," Wohlberg says. In 2007, Wohlberg joined Field and Brown at Symmetrics, where Brown was renowned for making the most out of the team's relatively small budget.

Today, Wohlberg and Brown work for Human Powered Health, a UCI ProTeam with both women's and men's rosters. Brown lives in Girona, Spain—a place he and many others refer to as a mecca for pro cycling. Brown is the service course manager, taking care of equipment logistics for both squads.

When asked where he sees himself in the next few years, he brushes it off. "Well, this weekend I've got to glue a lot of tubulars, hopefully only 15 but we'll see," jokes Brown. The team has moved to tubeless tires, however, he wouldn't be Geoff Brown if he didn't have his backup plan.

"I've been hit by a motorcycle, run over by a car. A team director even took off and left me on the side of the road."

Photos: Matt Grayson

FEATURE

THE 2023 CANADIAN CYCLING MAGAZINE BIG RIDE GUIDE

THIS IS THE YEAR TO TAKE ON AN EVENT, WHETHER IT'S ON GRAVEL, TARMAC OR TRAILS

by **Dean Campbell**

FIND AN EVENT IN YOUR PART OF THE COUNTRY, OR AN AREA YOU'D LIKE TO VISIT AND EXPLORE BY BIKE. HERE'S A COLLECTION OF 20 TOP EVENTS THAT INCLUDE GRAVEL ADVENTURES, ROAD RIDES AND MOUNTAIN BIKE CHALLENGES. THERE'S ALSO TIPS AND INSIDE INFORMATION TO HELP YOU GET READY FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD.

Photo: Julien Payette

GRAVEL ADVENTURES

BIG RED GRAVEL RUN ↓BELOW

LOCATION: HARRINGTON, QUE.

DATE: AUGUST 12–13

DISTANCES: 60, 130 KM

COST: $95, PLUS ADD-ONS FOR CAMPING

WEBSITE: BIGREDGRAVELRUN.COM

The Big Red Gravel Run takes its name from the Rouge River that flows through the Harrington Valley before joining the Ottawa River between the nation's capital and Montreal. The full 130 km route promises the "full monty" of surfaces, including technical singletrack. This route is billed as the gravel connoisseur's choice. The shorter 60-km route is designed for "the gravel curious." Don't run a tire narrower than 38c.

Like any gravel ride, there are feed stops along the way, and emergency support if you need it. Unlike any other event, you'll want to keep an eye out for the mysterious Bisso. Legend has it that more than 200 years ago, a local lost control of his horse-drawn carriage and plunged into the river. He was never found and presumed dead. A few years later, the otherworldly Bisso was spotted living in the depths of the river and coming to the surface to hunt. Be careful during any mid-ride swims so that you're not the Bisso's next meal.

BELGIAN WAFFLE RIDE

LOCATION: DUNCAN, B.C.

DATE: MAY 28

DISTANCES: 60, 115, 220 KM

COST: US$125–US$225

WEBSITE: BELGIANWAFFLERIDE.BIKE

This year, the Belgian Waffle Ride has its first event in Canada, in the Cowichan Valley—or, precisely, Quw'utsun in Hul'qumi'num, in the local Coast Salish language—on Vancouver Island. The half-paved, half-gravel route promises to include some chunky West Coast off-road elements along singletrack, doubletrack and logging roads. On the route, you'll see totem poles, ocean views, the Cowichan and Koksilah Rivers, rainforests with trees several hundred years old, and perhaps even a sasquatch.

Organizers recommend you bring a light gravel bike. Such a rig will help you take on the 2,700 m of elevation you'll face if you're riding the longest distance, which is about 220 km. The final climb is a steep one with pitches of 29 per cent, so make sure you have some low gears. Run a tire at least 30-mm wide, but wider is probably better. A fasting-rolling tread is good, but you'll also want some side knobs on that tire for grip in loose corners.

THEBLUMOOSE GRAVEL RIDE ↓BOTTOM

LOCATION: GOLDEN, B.C.

DATE: JUNE 10

DISTANCES: 100, 200, 300 KM

COST: $200

WEBSITE: THEBLUMOOSE.COM

TheBluMoose Gravel routes explore some spectacular scenery in the Canadian Rockies. Meandering up and over both the Purcell and Rocky Mountain ranges, the courses cross the Kicking Horse and Columbia Rivers. Ride fast if you want, but do take some shots with your smartphone.

The course options make TheBluMoose a ride for most anyone. Gravel newbies may prefer to ride the 100-km route, while the strongest can test themselves with the 300-km option. No matter which route you take, everyone will be ready to trade stories and celebrate the day's achievements at the after-party.

Pack a rain jacket. Weather in the mountains can change quickly. The gravel on the course is fast-rolling. Outfit your bike with 38c tires or wider. Bring snacks, but there's also lots of grub at the aid stations. Located every 50 km, these stops have made-to-order sandwiches and other refreshments. Organizers encourage you to treat the aid stations like buffets—you'll need the calories.

OKANAGAN GRAVELLER

LOCATION: KELOWNA, B.C.

DATE: SEPTEMBER 24

DISTANCES: 50, 120, 200 KM

COST: $80–$205

WEBSITE: OKANAGANGRAVELLER.COM

September in the Okanagan Valley is tough to beat. Explore the best gravel in the region with the Okanagan Graveller. Be prepared to climb: the 200-km route features nearly 3,000 m of elevation gain. Weather can change quickly in the region, so bring layers and a shell.

"By adding in a 50-km option this year we hope to entice those who are just beginning in cycling or in gravel," says founder and executive director Jodi Cross. "We want an atmosphere where those who want to push can push hard, and those who want to experience a gravel event can come and do that, too. We stand by our tagline: grit, gravel, glory."

Each of the three routes starts and finishes at a new start and finish area at the Kelowna Nordic Ski Club, on the scenic Hydraulic Lake.

Photo: Chris Monette

FONDO FAUX PAS

CHARGE AHEAD

Close to 10 years ago, I and much of the staff at *Canadian Cycling Magazine* took on a gran fondo north of Toronto. It was a warm sunny day. The route would be hilly. If everything went well, we'd be jamming on those climbs, enjoying the pain we'd inflict on each other.

About one quarter of the way into the event, my shifting started to behave strangely. I couldn't shift into the big ring. Then the rear derailleur wouldn't move any more. I started drifting out the back of the group as I couldn't turn the proper gear. My colleague dropped back to see what was up. "I'm out of juice," I said. He had to go as the group was moving away from us quickly. I learned later that he thought I was saying that I had bonked. But it wasn't me who had run out of energy. It was my groupset's battery that was empty. The rest of the ride was mellow on the flats, was a struggle on the climbs and featured a bit of egg-beater action at the cranks on the descents.

Some of the hard lessons I've had at big events—the importance of fuelling, the role of good pacing—I often forget or keep getting wrong (especially pacing). The lesson I learned after I pedalled a dead battery around for more than 100 km, however, I've learned well. Now, the night before an event, I make sure I check the batteries on everything: the groupset, the head unit and the power pedals. I may not always get enough rest before a big ride, but my gear is fully charged.—*Matthew Pioro*

REGGIE RAMBLE ↓BELOW

LOCATION: WARKWORTH, ONT.

DATE: JULY 15

DISTANCES: 65, 130, 200 KM

COST: $85–$115

WEBSITE: REGGIERAMBLE.COM

Ready to ride the Reggie Ramble? This event was founded around fun, and that's still the driving ethos. This year will feature new routes in the Trent Hills region. The Ramble is built on three loops. The first loop is the shortest ride option. It returns you to the red barn at the Warkworth Fairgrounds. You pass through the barn and head out on the second loop if you are doing the 130 km option. A third loop will bring the total distance to 200 km. Expect 1,000 m of climbing per round. Some of that elevation comes via special ambush sections that will have you dumping gears in a hurry.

Whether you race or pace, the Reggie Ramble is a great event. First-timers can get prime advice from videos on the Ramble's website. Come prepared with tires at least 38-mm wide and gearing suitable for those ambushes (grades of more than 20 per cent). While the route loops are a great feature, allowing participants to return to the start/finish to refresh and refuel, 130-km and 200-km riders might find it tempting to cut their rides short and enjoy the vibes in the Warkworth Fairgrounds sooner than later.

BLUE MOUNTAINS GRAVEL FONDO

LOCATION: THORNBURY, ONT.

DATE: JUNE 11

DISTANCES: 80, 125 KM

COST: $165

WEBSITE: THEBLUEMOUNTAINSGRAVELFONDO.COM

Do you want to chase after a rainbow jersey? You can start that challenge in Canada at the new Blue Mountains Gravel Fondo. The event is part of the UCI Gravel World Series. If you finish in the top 25 per cent of your age group, you qualify for the UCI gravel world championships.

The Blue Mountains Gravel Fondo route makes great use of roads and a little singletrack up and down the Niagara Escarpment, through the Kolapore Uplands and the Beaver Valley.

Set up your gravel or cyclocross bike with 35-mm file-tread tires—you can skip chunkier treads. The organizers suggest you have at least 28-tooth cog at the back, but really a 36-tooth or larger is better for the 1,400 m of climbing on the 120 km route.

Food, drink and social time await at the finish, so be sure to save some energy for recounting your favourite race moments.

SCARECROW GRAVEL RIDE

LOCATION: COLLINGWOOD, ONT.

DATE: JUNE 17

DISTANCES: 48, 68, 88 KM

COST: $100–$150

WEBSITE: SEAOTTERCANADA.COM/SCARECROW-GRAVEL

This year, the Scarecrow Gravel Ride will start atop Blue Mountain just outside Collingwood, Ont. Each of the event's three routes snakes down the mountain and ends in the Blue Mountain Village, where the Sea Otter Canada Bike Festival will be in full swing. Along the way, ride and chat with friends. If you are feeling competitive, timed sections within the route will give you the chance to go flat out. After each section, regroup and ride casually—think enduro gone gravel. Pro racer Ruby West will lead the ride.

Put 40c tires on your bike. They'll not only keep you rolling on the rough surfaces, but they'll get you to the rest stop where the Blackbird Pie Co. will be supplying butter tarts. Quite the Canadian fuelling option, eh?

The gravel ride is just one of many events at Sea Otter Canada. If you have endurance to spare, follow the Scarecrow with the Sea Otter Enduro the next day. Walk off your rides by exploring the expo area and checking out new bikes from a host of manufacturers.

Photo: Courtesy Reggie Ramble

BACK FORTY HIGHLANDER

LOCATION: NORTH FRONTENAC AND LANARK HIGHLANDS, ONT.
DATE: SEPTEMBER 16
DISTANCES: 20, 40, 75, 120 KM
COST: $60–$110 (UNDER-19 RIDERS GET 50 PER CENT OFF)
WEBSITE: GRAVELCUP.COM

The final round of the Gravel Cup series, the Back Forty Highlander snakes through the remains of ancient mountains between Ottawa and Toronto, using old logging roads that are almost forgotten. The quiet back roads are often tree-lined with one lane. Part of the route glides along the Mississippi River.

"This is the area that made me fall hook, line and sinker in love with gravel and inspired me to create the Gravel Cup in the first place," says event organizer Brendan Gorman. "After five years of riding them, it's still hard for me to believe that roads like this exist."

Set up your bike with 35c tires or wider. Be prepared to ride self-supported. Pack tubes, tire plugs, levers and a multi-tool. There are aid stations, but be sure to carry some fuel with you. If your bike totally breaks down on course, the route patrol can give you a lift back to the start/finish venue.

By the time you reach the finish, you'll be ready for good food and drink. The Back Forty farm's wood-fired kitchen will serve up delicious farm-to-table offerings.

XFONDO ↑ABOVE

LOCATION: WHISTLER, B.C.
DATE: JUNE 17
DISTANCES: 42, 60 KM
COST: $225–$250
WEBSITE: XFONDO.COM

Do you have a fun-loving and sometimes trouble-making relative that gets you in deeper than you'd expect? They'd love Xfondo and so will you. Imagine a road ride that keeps detouring off of paved surfaces. Gravel? For sure. Trails? Why not. Dirt? Of course. You won't come back clean, but you'll finish smiling.

"The distances are lower because they need to be: you'll have your senses challenged and stimulated as you whizz through the trees, puddles and switchbacks, carve up lung-busting climbs and sail through views that pure roadies would never get to see," says Oli Cartmell, marketing director for Xfondo. You won't want to be using your road shoes and cleats: the event starts Le Mans-style, with a short dash to your bike.

With an event like this, picking the right bike can be tricky. Some opt for fast gravel bikes, others choose mountain bikes. Pick your priorities, and then pick your ride. But if you want to keep up with special guest and former WorldTour pro Svein Tuft, pick something fast.

FONDO FAUX PAS

BONKING ABROAD

In 2015, I lined up on a road in Italy's Dolomite Mountains with about 9,000 other riders. At 6:30 a.m., we were off for the Maratona dles Dolomites. Many of us were taking on the 138-km course that featured an elevation gain of 4,230 m. The most intimidating of the passes on that route is Passo Giau. It averages 9.3 per cent along 9.9 km. Before the start, I felt a bit of dread.

In the leadup to that ride, I should have spent more time planning my fuelling than looking at elevation numbers and gradients. Not only did I not stuff enough food in my jersey pockets, I didn't grab as much fuel as I should have at the aid stations preceding the big pass. As I approached Giau, which followed the four passes of the Sella Ronda, I was starting to feel a bit hungry, which, of course, meant I was way behind in my consumption of calories. The climb was a tough, tough slog. Anytime the grade came down to seven per cent, I felt some relief. At the top, I was seriously bonked.

There was an aid station at the top of the pass. Since I was a bit loopy from hunger, I decided to follow up the two sandwiches I wolfed down with a 15-minute break to get myself together for the long descent. The grub and the rest did the trick. The climb up Passo Falzarego and Valparola was manageable. I finished well, and then cramped up. It was a great day on the bike.

Today, some of my favourite ride fuel is peanut butter and jam in a tortilla wrap, as well as hummus in a wrap. Put inside a plastic bag, they fit nicely into a jersey pocket.—*MP*

Photo: Clint Trahan

ROAD RIDES

MS BIKE ↑ABOVE

LOCATION: 12 EVENTS INCLUDING FRASER VALLEY, LEDUC, RIDING MOUNTAIN, GRAND BEND AND OTTAWA

DATE: JUNE–SEPTEMBER (DEPENDING ON EVENT)

DISTANCES: 60 TO 150 KM (DEPENDING ON EVENT)

COST: $40 TO $80 REGISTRATION FEE PLUS $500 MINIMUM FUNDRAISING

WEBSITE: MSSPBIKE.DONORDRIVE.COM

With MS Bike, you can do some good from the saddle and raise funds for research and treatment for the 90,000 Canadians living with multiple sclerosis. These long-standing events are top-tier: fully supported along the way with food, drinks and roadside assistance.

While most events take place throughout two days, a couple of single-day options exist in Manitoba and Alberta. For double days, the organizers will help you find places to stay. There's also entertainment for you after you complete Day 1. The rides move at a social pace so you can enjoy time with your friends and make new ones.

RBC GRANFONDO WHISTLER ↙BOTTOM

LOCATION: WHISTLER, B.C.

DATE: SEPTEMBER 9

DISTANCES: 55, 122, 152 KM

COST: $300–$949 (DEPENDING ON DISTANCE AND PACKAGE)

WEBSITE: RBCGRANFONDO.COM/WHISTLER

The RBC GranFondo Whistler is the one chance a year to ride the Sea to Sky Highway from Vancouver's Stanley Park to Whistler Village—all without car traffic. Just you and more than 5,500 other riders cruising along the coast, through Howe Sound, and up into the mountains to a cheering crowd of spectators at the finish line.

As one of North America's largest gran fondos, you'll want to plan ahead for the best experience. Book early if you are planning to stay in a hotel in Whistler. The same goes for bike/rider transportation options between the start and finish. You can treat yourself with the Alta Classe VIP package, which gets you to the front of the line at the Lions Gate Bridge, as well as access to a lounge at the finish.

Bring a warm layer, especially something to cut the wind on long descents. For this event, pacing is key as there's a lot of climbing that will wear down your legs. Organizers run fondo clinics, starting in June, to help you prepare. Even though the event is fully supported, do ride with plenty of water and fuel.

Photos: Courtesy MS; Sterling Lorence Photography

TOUR DE VICTORIA ↓BELOW

LOCATION: VICTORIA, B.C.
DATE: AUGUST 19
DISTANCES: 15, 30, 45, 60, 100, 140, 160 KM, PLUS A FREE KIDS RIDE
COST: $60–$260, YOUTH PAY $25
WEBSITE: TOURDEVICTORIA.COM

Ryder Hesjedal's Tour de Victoria has rides as varied as the terrain surrounding Victoria. There are eight distances to choose from. Ebikes are welcome. You'll find plenty of aid stations on your way to the festival at the finish, complete with food and drink from Spinnakers, one of Canada's oldest microbreweries.

If you are taking on the 160-km ride, be in shape for hills, lots of them. The course is also pretty twisty, so make sure your bike-handling skills are up for it.

GRANFONDO PEI

LOCATION: CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I.
DATE: AUGUST 25–27
DISTANCES: 100, 150 KM
COST: $239–$449
WEBSITE: GRANFONDO-PEI.CA

The GranFondo PEI is much more than a ride; it's an entire weekend of festivities, including relaxed rides before and after the big event. If you do it all, you'll enjoy 260 km of pedalling spread throughout two days.

The gran and medio fondo routes go "coast-to-coast," passing through Prince Edward National Park in the north and Charlottetown in the south. When you're not on your bike, there's the island hospitality, exceptional meals and great entertainment. If you're keen on this event, act quickly as it's capped at 300 entries.

BLUEWATER INTERNATIONAL GRANFONDO

LOCATION: SARNIA, ONT.
DATE: AUGUST 6
DISTANCES: 30, 50, 100, 150 KM
COST: $70–$180
WEBSITE: BIGF.CA

Take a ride through the scenic farmlands of southwestern Ontario and along the Lake Huron shoreline in the Bluewater International GranFondo. Organizers have built a strong reputation among fans of gran fondos. All the core features—route design, fuel stations, food and drink at the finish—are done well.

Don't worry about racing. Enjoy the ride. All ages, abilities and bikes, including ebikes, are welcome. If you do want to jam, there are timed sections. After your hard efforts, you can rejoin your friends and continue on together.

What really helps this event stand out is its focus on the communities in the region. The organizers are committed to cycling for life, helping to run kids' cycling programs and working to develop a Cycling Without Age initiative to get seniors out as passengers on specially designed bikes. The community work also goes much deeper. The B.I.G. raises funds for Big Brothers Big Sisters, St. Joseph's Hospice in Sarnia Lambton and the Bluewater Health Foundation. Since the event's inception, it has raised more than $350,000 to support charities in the region. If you live in the area, there are many ways to get involved in cycling events beyond the fondo weekend.

Photo: Jennifer Letham

FONDO FAUX PAS

OFF PACE

I am terrible at pacing myself in a long event. There. I've admitted it.

I'd like to blame cyclocross, in part. As tricky as the mud, barriers and run-ups can be in 'cross, there's a certain simplicity to your effort: just go hard. Keeping my heart rate at a threshold level for 40 minutes is doable. When it comes to an event that requires hours of riding, I have to ride within the limits of my fitness on the day. But, usually, I don't.

From the gun, I'm often caught up in the excitement. I follow that rider who's moving up. I fire up the first climb. The second one, too. I feel great and feisty, until I don't. Then, I realize I've not only burned all my matches, but the entire matchbook.

I can think of one event that I paced well. (Only one! Surely, there must be more.) The roads we were on weren't closed, so a mass start wasn't possible. All the riders were put into groups of 10, and then sent off, group by group. Instead of going hard from the start, I and the others in my squad simply rode at a good pace that was manageable by all. When I was at the front, I watched my head unit, à la Chris Froome, to keep my speed and power steady. I then had energy all the way to the finish. Just fantastic.

Somehow, I need a way of getting start-of-the-big-ride me to just chill out. He needs to have some sympathy for later-in-the-big-ride me, who needs to be able to carry on at a good clip to the end. I think I should tape this little story to my handlebars before an event, for everyone to see.—*MP*

L'ÉTAPE CANADA BY TOUR DE FRANCE ↓BOTTOM

LOCATION: SHERWOOD PARK, ALTA.
DATE: AUGUST 13
DISTANCES: 45, 80, 140 KM, PLUS FAMILY AND KIDS' RIDES
COST: $50–$190 (DEPENDING ON DISTANCE); $610 FOR CLASSE SPECIALE
WEBSITE: LETAPECANADA.COM

This is the event for all fans of the Tour de France. If you want to race, there are jerseys up for grabs—yellow, green and polka dot. If you're not after the podium, you can find the challenge that is right for you.

As a part of the L'Étape by Tour de France network, the event in Strathcona County, east of Edmonton, gets all participants early-bird registration access to L'Étape in France, which is handy as that ride sells out its 160,000 entries in minutes. The top three finishers of the 140-km route in Alberta win free entry to the French race.

In 2022, Alberto Contador participated in the L'Étape Canada. His advice for those aiming to win the event: attack at the KOM/QOM that comes at the halfway point. It's the best place to drop others. Still, make sure you still have some riders with you so you can save some energy for the final push.

Photo: Finisherpix

MOUNTAIN BIKE EVENTS

CROSS COUNTRY NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS ↑ABOVE

LOCATION: KENTVILLE, N.S.

DATE: JULY 20-23

DISTANCES: VARY WITH CLASS

COST: $30-$100

WEBSITE: KENTVILLECANADACUP.CA

Cross country nationals are all about speed. Canada's top racers—including Olympians—will be racing elbow to elbow to earn maple-leaf jerseys. If you're feeling up to the challenge, there's plenty of race categories that will be contested on the weekend, an hour and a half northwest of Halifax.

"Our races are held just minutes from downtown Kentville. We always draw a big crowd with hundreds of spectators to cheer you on," says Ryan Lindh, race organizer. "The XC course has plenty to offer with a great mix of technical singletrack, including multiple drops, jumps, steep downhills and demanding climbs. This year's short track will include new wide, fast-paced trails with just enough features to spice things up, plus more of those screaming fans to help you power through the race."

Of course, if you're a fan of racing, but perhaps not a fan of competing yourself, come out to watch. Bring your favourite cowbell and get ready to make some noise. This is a great chance to see some of the best riders in the world. Find nearby hotels or an AirBnB, or camp to stay close to the action and enjoy the festival atmosphere.

DUNBAR SUMMER SERIES

LOCATION: BRITISH COLUMBIA

DATE: JULY 16, JULY 19, AUGUST 13, AUGUST 20

COST: $65-$75

WEBSITE: FACEBOOK.COM/DUNBARSUMMERSERIES

The Dunbar Summer Series is back for 2023, serving up some of B.C.'s best downhill trails at four great locations. Fernie Alpine Resort opens the series on July 16 and doubles as the Canadian downhill championships. Riders will get to race on the revitalized Rumplestumpskin Trail, creating a new challenge for all. For those new to DH racing, check out CyclingBC's new racer information guide on its site.

Three days after the Fernie event, you can test yourself against the clock at the second round, hosted by Panorama Mountain Resort. The series moves to Kicking Horse Mountain Resort for Aug. 13, and a week later closes out with the Canada Cup finals at Sun Peaks Resort on Aug. 20. Accommodations and entries can book up fast, so get cracking.

Photo: Tim Foster

CANADIAN ENDURO LEAGUE

LOCATION: 10 EVENTS IN B.C., ALBERTA, ONTARIO, QUEBEC, INCLUDING THE WESTERN CUP, EASTERN CUP AND CANADIAN ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIPS

DATE: MAY–OCTOBER

DISTANCE: VARIES BY EVENT, BUT EXPECT BIG DAYS ON THE BIKE

COST: VARIES BY EVENT

WEBSITE: CANADIANENDURO.COM

The Canadian Enduro League is the new face of the Canadian Enduro Series. The current organizing team includes past series-owner Ted Morton returning to the fold alongside five others. They have changes planned for the new league.

The group is introducing Eastern and Western Cup events. In the past, the Norco Canadian Enduro Series visited Ontario's Blue Mountain, as well as Bromont and Camp Fortune in Quebec. This year will mark the first time the series will head east since 2019.

"If you're going to be a national-level event, you have to be going across Canada as much as you can," Morton says before adding his personal connection with the project. "I grew up in Ontario, so I really wanted to get back there.

"The idea is to create one race that's representative of the toughest challenges in each part of Canada. It gives those regional riders something to shoot for that is not nationals."

The league will not only showcase trails across Canada, but give more riders a pathway between grassroots and national or international racing. "Having an event come to town really allows you to see where you stand before you make the jump to travel across the country," Morton says. "Often, you get surprised. You're actually more competitive than you expected and it's really motivating."

Internationally, with the Enduro World Series changing to Enduro World Cup, the qualification process has undergone modifications as well. The CEL now stands as one of the main ways for Canadian riders to gain access to the world's top races.

BC BIKE RACE

LOCATION: VANCOUVER ISLAND, B.C.

DATE: JULY 3–9

DISTANCES: VARIES AMONG THE PROLOGUE AND SIX STAGES

COST: $2,199

WEBSITE: BCBIKERACE.COM

The 2023 BC Bike Race returns to Vancouver Island, starting off in the Cowichan Valley. While the event boasts the most singletrack of any stage race, that only scratches the surface of what's on-offer.

"For a true connoisseur of everything mountain biking, the BC Bike Race has well and truly earned its reputation as the best week on a bike," says Andreas Hestler, marketing director for the event. "Now let's get down to the nuts and bolts: it's all in the staff, the care and curation of a weeklong adventure focused on challenging and fun riding, plus the legendary trails of B.C. are indeed sublime."

To perform well throughout multiple days of riding, sleep is key. Hestler recommends putting some thought into your sleeping setup for your time in the basecamp. Get a good sleeping bag and pad or mattress so that you'll snooze well.

Getting a spot at this event can be a challenge in itself. If you miss your chance for 2023, early-bird pricing for the following year will open in the fall.

TRANSROCKIES SINGLETRACK 6 ↙↓BELOW

LOCATION: FERNIE, B.C., TO CANMORE, ALTA

DATE: JULY 13–18

DISTANCES: SIX STAGES, 30–40 KM PER DAY

COST: $899–$1,799

WEBSITE: SINGLETRACK6.COM

TransRockies has been putting on events for 20 years. In 2014, what was the TransRockies Challenge became the SingleTrack 6. This year, throughout the six days of ST6, you will explore spectacular trails from the southeast of B.C. to the foothills of Alberta. The event snakes through river valleys, over alpine passes and across arid landscape.

To help you prepare, the ST6 experts highly recommend strength training, not just for power, but to improve physical balance, increase range of motion and boost core endurance. If you have a quiver of bikes, making the best choice for a stage race can be a challenge. Consider what you're looking to accomplish—the podium or smiles per mile—and where your strengths lie. The course is rideable on an XC bike, however, an enduro bike will gobble up the downhills. A trail bike is a great do-it-all choice, too.

Photos: John Gibson

SINGLETRACK6
RIDE THE WEST
TRANSROCKIES RACE SERIES
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2023

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ROAD

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ROAD DREAM MACHINES

Trek Madone SLR 9 $17,750

The Trek Madone enters its seventh generation with no shortage of updates. Trek's patented IsoSpeed is replaced with IsoFlow (a.k.a. that big hole in the seat tube) designed to cut weight, maintain compliance and manage airflow. The Madone's new cockpit aims to put you in a more aero position, with a 42-cm handlebar measuring 39 cm at the hoods. Bontrager Aeolus RSL 51 wheels are spec'd along with a SRAM Red eTap AXS groupset, power meter included. Eight frame sizes are available, not to mention an endless choice of dazzling paint schemes through Trek's Project One program. (*trekbikes.com*)

Cervélo S5 $17,000

Cervélo's latest S5 shows a continued refinement of its aero-first line, now into its second decade. Its unique V-shaped stem has been simplified and lightened, along with enhancements to the frame to cut drag. Unlike many of its aero rivals, the new S5 will clear a tire as wide as 34 mm. The redesigned Reserve wheelset offers mismatched rim depths—63 mm in the back and 52 mm in front—to cut through the wind. The frame is available in five sizes: 48 cm to 58 cm. Campagnolo fans, however, are out of luck as the Italian brand's electronic groupsets are not compatible with the S5. (*cervelo.com*)

No. 22 Aurora US$6,199 (frame)

No. 22 is a Toronto-based company that makes titanium bikes in its production facility in Johnstown, N.Y., hence the frame price above in greenbacks instead of loonies. The Aurora is an all-road frame. Yes, you can race it as you would the No. 22 Reactor, but the Aurora would also carry you without complaint over rough roads. While ti is the main material here, there's also a lot of carbon, such as the seatmast, which helps to dampen road vibrations, and the designed-for-No. 22 fork. If you opt for a 3D printed titanium stem, you can ensure all the cables of your electronic groupset run internally. (*22bicycles.com*)

Scott Foil RC Pro $14,500

Scott's revamped Foil RC Pro attempts the improbable: an lightweight aero race bike that is comfortable. Using Scott's second-tier HMX carbon layup, this Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 equipped package tips scales at 7.32 kg. Tube shapes have become drastically more aero, most notably in the seat tube, with a tire-hugging design more commonplace in time trial bikes. At the front, the Syncros Creston iC SL Aero bar/stem combo also helps the bike move through the wind smoothly. The Duncan SL Aero CFT seatpost features a large rubber section that aids in comfort. Vittoria Corsa cotton tubeless tires add to that comfort. The front tread is 26-mm wide, while the rear is 28 mm. (*micasport.com*)

Bridge Bike Works Surveyor $12,000

Bridge Bike Works aims to design, engineer, build and ship all their bikes from their 8,200 sq.-ft. facility in Toronto. The Surveyor is the company's first model and a self-proclaimed n+1 destroyer. A proprietary carbon layup boasts 40-mm tire clearance and modern features, such as a T47 bottom bracket and internal cable routing. The geometry should give you the reactivity of a road bike, but the tire clearance keeps it capable on rough roads. The frame, available in five sizes and colours, will run you $4,999. The Surveyor is offered in various build kits from modest to hyper-bike pricing. For $12,000, you can get a machine equipped with a 2-by SRAM Force AXS group with Zipp 303 Firecrest wheels. (*bridgebikeworks.com*)—*Jake Williams*

ARGON 18
HUNT

Wilier
TRIESTINA

BOTTECCHIA

Argon 18 Sum $7,850

Early in 2022, Argon 18 launched the Sum, which still adds up as top option for the road. The Montreal-based company brought together the wind-cheating abilities of its aero Nitrogen and the lightness of its Gallium into one bike. On the Sum, the hourglass shape of the head tube, the internally routed hoses, the shape of the fork blades and the seat tube's cut-out are all features that help the bike move through the air smoothly. The frame is responsive and saunters up climbs. Its drivetrain is SRAM's Force eTap AXS. It rolls on the Hunt 4 Season wheelset. The wheels are fantastic for 95 per cent of your rides. That other five per cent? Well, if that's racing, you might want rims that are a little lighter and a bit more aero, to make this fast bike even quicker. (*argon18.com*)

Wilier GTR Team Disc $5,995

This GTR Team Disc gives you a lot of bang for your buck. The carbon-fibre frame sports an endurance geometry, which puts you slightly more upright than a full-on racer. You'll be comfortable on long rides on country roads, while still having the frame stiffness required for a town-line sprint. The frame and fork are not the lightest, about 1.58 kg, but you are not pushing much more mass compared with a top-end frame. You do save some weight with the mechanical Shimano Ultegra group, a big bonus on this build. A 50/34-tooth crankset moves the chain back to a 11–30 tooth cassette. It's a range that will get you up paved inclines easily and many rougher surfaces with a bit of extra torque. Shimano rotors bring the alloy Shimano RS171 wheels to a stop. (*wilier.com*)

Bottecchia 8avio Revolution Disc $4,500

This year, Montreal's Logica Sport will start bringing Bottecchia to Canada. Riders such as Greg LeMond, Stefano Garzelli and Gianni Motta had career-defining wins with the Italian bike brand. The 8avio Revolution is a lively road bike with a fit that's slightly on the endurance side. Its carbon-fibre frame tips the scales at a little more than 1 kg. One of the builds coming to our shores features Shimano's I-can't-believe-it's-mid-range groupset: the 11-speed 105 mechanical system. FSA components round out the bike. The wheels are Vision's journeyman hoops, the alloy Team 30 Disc. Hooked into those rims are smooth rolling 25c Veloflex Corsa Evo tires. (*logicasport.com*)—*Matthew Pioro*

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2023
BUYER'S
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GEAR

ROAD PRICE POINT

Liv Avail AR 1 $2,689

Giant's sister brand, Liv, makes the Avail AR, a compact, aluminum-frame bike designed (as the AR in the name suggests) for all roads. Matched with a composite fork and Liv's D-Fuse composite seatpost, as well as the room to fit tires as wide as 38 mm, the Avail AR can keep you comfortable and in control on just about any surface. The AR 1 model comes in four sizes—XXS to M—each with an 11-speed mechanical Shimano 105 drivetrain with matching hydraulic disc brakes. It rolls on Giant's P-R2 wheels with 32-mm-wide Giant Gavia Fondo 2 tubeless tires. (*liv-cycling.com*)

Specialized Allez Sprint Comp $2,999

Packing plenty of value into a great-looking package, the Specialized Allez Sprint Comp is easily confused with the much-pricier Tarmac SL7. Specialized took everything it learned from its carbon race bike and built what it calls the world's first alloy super bike. It has the Tarmac's aero design and internal-cable routing with the supple ride of well-tuned aluminum. You also get a full 11-speed mechanical Shimano 105 drivetrain including hydraulic disc brakes and durable DT Swiss wheels with Specalized's Turbo Pro tires. The Allez Sprint gets a full range of Specialized cockpit parts, including the Tarmac SL7's carbon seatpost. (*specialized.com*)

Canyon Endurace 6 $1,949

The aluminum Canyon Endurace was designed to give you all-day comfort and reliable components in a low-price build. The Endurace 6 is the disc-brake option (Endurace 6 RB has rim brakes), which features well-balanced geometry with a carbon fork. Canyon stocks the bike with Fulcrum Racing 900 DB wheels wrapped in 30-mm-wide Schwalbe One tires. The frame and fork, however, will accommodate up to 35-mm rubber for more grip and cushioning. The bike comes with a Shimano Tiagra drivetrain and Canyon's aluminum handlebars, seatpost and stem. Available in an impressive eight sizes and two colourways. (*canyon.com*)—*Dan Dakin*

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2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

GRAVEL DREAM MACHINES

Pinarello Grevil F $10,100

Stunning in its functionality and design, the Pinarello Grevil is unapologetic in its single-minded purpose of being a competition machine. The F that follows the name, like the one that is also associated with the latest Dogma, indicates the frame is for top-level events and top speeds. To keep things sleek, the Italian brand routes all the cables and hoses internally. The fork flap works to smooth out the airflow round the front rotor and caliper. The Grevil F can handle off-road tires as wide as 50 mm or even 2.1" mountain bike tires on 650b rims. There are six sizes available. The $10,100 price covers a complete Campagnolo Ekar build. (*unoimports.com*)

Specialized Diverge STR Expert $9,799

Specialized has decades of experience in the dirt, which it puts into the Diverge STR Expert. Built with Specialized's Fact 11r carbon, the frame runs Future Shock suspension, giving you 20 mm of front and 30 mm of rear tunable travel. Combined with loads of tire clearance (47 mm on 700c wheels and 2.1" on 650b), the Diverge gives you the tools to stay in the saddle for the longest of races in any conditions. The drivetrain is SRAM's 1 x 12 Rival eTAP AXS setup with matching hydraulic disc brakes. The wheels are Specialized's own proven Roval Terra C with 42-mm Tracer Pro tires. You also get the brand's cockpit components, highlighted by an S-Works carbon seatpost. (*specialized.com*)

De Rosa Gravel $11,999

This Italian gravel machine comes to Canada via Montreal's Logica Sport. The De Rosa Gravel you see here hues closely to the platinum kit build. At its core is Campagnolo's Ekar groupset, a 1-by system that gives you the range for rough roads and loose ascents. On downhill runs, the 12-degree flare of the FSA K-Wing bar will keep you confident and in control with your hands in the drops. FSA is also behind the stem and seatpost. The Gravel has plenty of mounts for bottle cages and a top-tube bag. The model shown here is running 38c Vittoria Terreno Mix tires, a good choice for surfaces with some texture to them. (*logicasport.com*)

Factor Ostro Gravel $12,899

While Factor's Ostro Vam won road races at the highest level, its new Ostro Gravel picks up the baton when the smooth surface turns rough. A full-on aero gravel race bike that can be built up in many different forms, the Ostro Gravel features the highest-end components if you're looking for the best of everything. The bike has its road sibling's DNA, but adds more rugged construction and gravel-specific geometry, and a wide range of mounting options for things such as extra bottle cages. This build package includes the SRAM Red XPLR eTAP AXS drivetrain featuring a built-in power meter. On the Black Inc Thirty Four carbon wheels with CeramicSpeed bearings you can put on tires as wide as 45 mm. You'll also get CeramicSpeed bearings at the headset and bottom bracket, while Black Inc provides the one-piece bar/stem combo. (*factorbikes.com*)

Felt Breed Carbon $8,499

In spring 2022, Felt spawned a new Breed. The company has had the aluminum Breed in its lineup for years. It was missing, however, a top-level gravel racer, which is what the new bike is. The frame can run 650b or 700c wheels, whichever you prefer. This SRAM Force XPLR eTap AXS build comes with 700c Zipp 303 S hoops and 38c Vittoria Terreno Dry tires, but there's clearance for treads as wide as 50 mm. Since this bike is 1-by, it sports a plate where a front derailleur would be. If you want to convert to a 2-by system, you can attach the right mount easily. Also upping this bike's versatility is its ability to run electronic or mechanical groupsets, rigid or suspension forks and 27.2-mm or 30.9-mm seatposts. (With the wider-diameter seatpost, you have forgo Felt's vibration-damping sleeve.) While you can really customize your Breed, you can also enjoy this pretty sharp, and fast build. (*feltbicycles.com*)—*DD*

Giant Revolt X Advanced Pro 1 $6,499

Debuting this past February, the Revolt X is Giant's gravel racer for really rough routes. The RockShox Rudy Ultimate XPLR fork gives you 40-mm of travel. The bike comes with 700 x 45c Giant CrossCut Grip 1 tires, but it can accommodate rubber as wide as 53 mm. At the rear dropout, there's a flip-chip that lets you set the wheel in a long or short position, a difference of 10 mm for the overall wheelbase. In the short setting, you get clearance for a 45-mm tire, while also making the bike slightly more agile. Whichever setting you choose, you'll find the bike quite capable on twisty tracks. With the Postmodern dropper post, you can push the saddle down 100 mm (or 75 on an XS frame) before you take on a hairy descent. (*giant-bicycles.com*)

YT Szepter Core 3 $5,499

YT's mountain bike DNA shines through in its Szepter Core 3 gravel bike. The carbon-fibre frame features a long reach and slack 69-degree head-tube angle. The RockShox Rudy XPLR suspension fork gives you 40 mm of travel to tackle more than just smooth gravel. A 45-mm tire will clear the frame, which also features a built-in rear fender for when it gets sloppy. SRAM Rival AXS shifts the Force XPLR derailleur across the gears wirelessly. The whole bike weighs 9.8 kg. There are five sizes available in the assault green paint scheme. (*ca.yt-industries.com*)

3T Exploro Ultra $6,999

3T's latest Exploro, which debuted April 2022, goes all-in on off-road. With a 1-by setup, the Ultra can run tires as wide as 45 mm. Using 650b wheels gives you even more clearance at 61 mm, which is XC mountain bike territory. Compared with the RaceMax, the Ultra has a larger seat tube cut-out to fit that off-road rubber, as well as a beefier down tube for better airflow around the tread. A round 27.2-mm seatpost means the bike is dropper-post ready. The frame uses a BB386EVO bottom bracket. The 13-speed Campagnolo build is completed by 650b Fulcrum Rapid Red 900 wheels. Six sizes are offered. (*3t.bike*)

Kona Rove LTD $3,299

The Kona Rove LTD's frame is timeless with its butted chromoly steel. The tapered head tube is paired with a carbon fork covered in mounting points—begging to be loaded with gear and ridden into the sunset. Externally routed cables and a threaded bottom bracket keep maintenance simple. Shifting and braking duties are taken up by Shimano's 11-speed GRX groupset. This Rove rolls on 650b WTB KOM Team i23 rims and 47c Maxxis Rambler tires, all-around gravel treads for hard-pack and beyond. (*konaworld.com*)—JW

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GEAR

GRAVEL PRICE POINT

Cube Nuroad Pro FE $2,399

Cube's Nuroad FE Pro is a great option if you are looking to start gravel riding. Parts are a mix, but the key components are from Shimano: GRX RX400 front and rear derailleurs, Tiagra levers, GRX RX600 crankset with 46/30-tooth chainrings and 10-speed Deore cassette. Brakes are TRP Spyre MD-C610C, which will do a reasonable job of slowing you down. The FE stands for fully equipped, and the bike is indeed. It comes with fenders, a rear rack, kickstand and a full lighting system, so you'll be ready to roll in the sloppiest, darkest riding conditions you can find. (*cube-bikes.ca*)

Argon 18 Grey Matter $2,900

This alloy-frame gravel bike aims to bring features of the company's performance-oriented Dark Matter, made of carbon fibre, to more riders at a more affordable price. The bikepacking-ready Grey Matter comes spec'd with a SRAM Apex 1 parts kit, which is very solid for the price, and the 1 x 11 drivetrain makes a lot of sense for gravel riding. Depending on your frame size, you can carry as many as three water bottles. There are also mounts on the top tube and fork blades. Smaller riders take note: the Grey Matter comes in size XXS, for anyone in the market for a 44–46 cm frame. (*argon18.com*)

Rocky Mountain Solo A50 $3,199

Rocky Mountain might not be the first name you think of when it comes to drop-bar bikes, but the company has actually been making them for a long time. Combine that with decades of off-road design experience and you have a winning combination. The Solo A50 (A for aluminum) is a 1 x 11 gravel-specific ride with a full complement of SRAM Rival parts. Thru axles on the Solo will make for a sufficiently stiff ride, while 40C WTB Venture tires rubber will smooth out some of the rough stuff. An added bonus: this bike is dropper post-compatible. (*bikes.com*)—*Stuart Kernaghan*

GIRO
ARIES SPHERICAL HELMET
LIKE NOTHING

EBIKES

A

2023
BUYER'S
GUIDE

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eROAD AND eGRAVEL

Trek Domane+ SLR 9 $17,000 A

Trek's redesigned Domane+ doesn't look like a carbon e-road bike at first glance. The subtly integrated TQ-HPR50 harmonic pin-ring motor quietly provides 50 Nm of assistance up to 32 km/h. The 360-Wh integrated battery gives roughly 100 km of range in Eco mode and takes less than three hours to charge. For really long days in the saddle, Trek offers a range extender battery that tucks neatly into a bottle cage. The build is rounded out with Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 and Bontrager Aeolus RSL 37 carbon wheels. The stock tires are 32-mm slicks, however the Domane+ will clear 40-mm rubber for even more comfort and adventure. (*trekbikes.com*)

Scott Solace Gravel eRide 30 $8,300 B

Scott's Solace range features a road version, and this Gravel eRide 30. Paired with TQ's nearly-silent mid-drive motor, the Solace delivers a steady 50 Nm of torque with three levels of assistance. A compatible range extender is available separately. This carbon gravel ebike is spec'd with SRAM Rival 11-speed shifters and brakes. Gearing is ample with a single 42-tooth chainring matched with an 11–42 tooth cassette. Syncros Capital 2.0 25e Disc wheels are wrapped with whopping 700 x 50c Schwalbe G-One Overland EVO tires. The endurance geometry is available in five sizes. (*micasport.com*)

Devinci E-Hatchet $5,499 C

Devinci's E-Hatchet is an aluminum ebike with a carbon fork, all built around Shimano's Steps E6100 mid-drive motor. The 418-Wh lithium-ion battery gives you 150 km of range, and detaches from the frame for easy charging. Rack and fender mounts add versatility. The frameset features traditional quick-release wheels. Maxxis Re-Fuse slick 40-mm tires come stock. They can fit under fenders, but without mud guards, there's clearance for 42-mm tires for when things get rough. Shimano GRX brakes are paired with a single 47-tooth chainring and an 11-speed, 11–34-tooth cassette. Cables run internally. The E-Hatchet is offered in four sizes. (*devinci.com*)

Argon 18 Subito E-Gravel $6,950 D

The Argon 18 Subito E-Gravel weighs 12.5 kg, thanks to the Ebikemotion X35+ drive system. Built around a 250-W motor in the rear hub, the system pumps out 40 Nm of torque. For long days, you can purchase a range extender that mounts just like a water bottle. Toggle between three levels of assistance using a single button integrated on the top tube. SRAM Rival 1 is spec'd throughout. The frame's 650b x 47c clearance is maxed with Vittoria Terreno Dry TLR tires. Litemove front and rear lights are included and run off the motor's battery. (*argon18.com*)—JW

B

C

D

2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

COMMUTER BIKES

Cube Supreme Sport Hybrid $4,299

The Supreme Sport Hybrid has a system that will keep on going. The third-generation Bosch Performance motor can pump out 75 Nm of torque. The bike's hefty 500-Wh battery, also by Bosch, provides power for hours. These are all numbers comparable with some eMTBs, so you should have no problem getting up climbs in your town, even with the bike's total weight of 25.6 kg. The machine is tricked out with all the commuting gear you could need: fenders, rear rack, kickstand and integrated lights. The 50-mm-travel front fork (SR Suntour NEX-E25) and 2"-wide tires (Continental Contact Urban) can take the edge off potholes. If you are not an executive at your office, you'll still totally boss the commute with the Supreme Sport Hybrid. (*cube-bikes.ca*)

Opus Connect LRT $4,250

The Shimano Steps E6100 motor on the Opus Connect LRT offers an excellent, natural-feeling assist. It's a mid-drive motor, sitting at the bike's bottom bracket, so its 60 Nm of torque (at maximum) comes in smoothly. Also, the motor's location means its 2.76 kg of weight is well-balanced within the frame. (The complete bike is about 22.4 kg.) At 418 Wh, the battery has a lot of oomph, giving the bike a range of roughly 125 km. The machine's non-e parts include a 11-32 tooth cassette and 38-tooth chainring. A Shimano Acera 9 shifter moves the chain in conjunction with the Acera Shadow derailleur. Opus is based in Montreal, so the Suntour NEX E-25 fork with 63 mm of travel might have been spec'd just for that city's roads, which do take a beating during winter. (*opusbike.com*)

Momentum Voya E+ 3 $2,999

The Momentum Voya E+ 3 is a sharp-looking e-commuter that gives you a little boost on city streets. The hub-drive motor provides 25 Nm of assistance: not a massive bump, but enough to take the sting out inclines. The whole bike weighs approximately 18 kg. The 250-Wh battery has a range between 40 and 75 km. So much of that range depends on what assist mode you've selected: eco, active and power (for the maximum amount of assistance), as well as auto. Toggling between modes is simple with the single button on the top tube. Battery life is also displayed on the top tube—no head unit required, which keeps things nice and neat. (*momentum-biking.com*)

Dahon Mariner D8 US$949

With fenders, kickstand and rear rack, the Dahon Mariner D8 comes ready to tackle your commutes. Since the bike folds up into a bundle about 83 x 35 x 67 cm, you can switch to and from a car, bus or train easily. Once you master the folding process, it should take you about 30 seconds to transform your machine. At 12.38 kg, the bike is not too bad when it comes to lugging it for short distances. A 52-tooth chainring works with an eight-speed, 11–32 tooth cassette to get you going. And the ride itself? The Mariner D8 feels pretty close to a full-size bike, but man, those 20" wheels sure spin up quickly. (*usa.dahon.com*)—*MP*

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2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

ROAD AND GRAVEL WHEELS

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Hunt **48 Limitless UD Carbon Spoke Disc** $2,582 A

The 48 Limitless UD Carbon Spoke Disc wheels debuted this past September. Hunt says that the carbon spokes that the set uses are more responsive than steel spokes. The composite parts also do a better job of managing road vibrations. Each rim features a 22.5-mm-wide internal width, which, along with the U-shape aero profile, is optimized for 25c–28c tires. The rims are hooked so you can run a wide range for treads. The Sprint SLC hubs are lighter than their predecessors: about 95 g at the front and 220 g at the rear. The whole wheelset is 1,511 g. For $581 more, you can go from EZO (steel) bearings to CeramicSpeed. (*huntbikewheels.cc*)

Token **C45D Resolute** $1,350 B

The Token C45D Resolute wheels are a big upgrade for your bike at a not-so-big price. They do weigh a bit more than others in this group, 1,676 g, but they roll well. Remember, Token knows how to make things spin. The brand's bottom brackets are top-notch. Token is also behind the hubs on the C45D Resolute wheels. These components are well-sealed and ready for bad weather. (*nomadfrontiers.ca*)

Vision **Metron 60 SL** $4,400 C

The rear Metron 60 SL wheel is built around Vision's Power Ratchet System hub. It uses a 72-tooth ratchet, which means the hub doesn't move more than five degrees before it engages. The hub weighs 218 g. The front and rear wheels for clincher rims (as opposed to tubular) come in at 1,480 g in total. Outfit these hoops with 25c or 28c tires before heading out into the wind on your aero road bike. (*visiontechusa.com*)

Shimano **GRX RX870** $1,870 D

In 2022, Shimano added the carbon RX870 wheels to its gravel focused GRX lineup. Previously, the alloy-rim RX570 wheels were the only hoops in the group. They are solid, but Shimano needed a top-end wheelset that was lighter and that could handle wider tires. The RX870 check both those boxes. At 1,461 g, they're 259 g lighter than their predecessors. With internal rim widths of 25 mm, the wheels can easily run tires ranging from 32 to 50 mm. This past season, the RX870 were the gravel wheels I kept coming back to. I don't see that changing in 2023. (*bike.shimano.com*)

Easton **EC90 AX** $2,050 E

For more than three years, Easton's EC90 AX gravel wheels have been taking riders across mix-surface routes. The company's Vault hubs help the wheels roll quickly. The rear unit has a 60-tooth drive ring and six pawls, which all make for fast engagement when the cogs feel the pull of the chain. The rims have an internal-rim width of 24 mm—great for tires 35 mm and wider. The set is 1,470 g. These hoops shine not only on gravel roads, but on trails, too. (*eastoncycling.ca*)

Campagnolo **Levante** $2,250 F

Campy's first proper gravel wheelset, Levante, has a fancy feature seen on some of the road wheels by the Italian brand. C-Lux, the finish on the carbon rims, is short for Campagnolo Luxury. Campagnolo says it's so smooth that it allows the company to forgo lacquer and to save weight, which is 1,485 g for the set. The rims have what Campy calls a mini-hook. The design lets you run a wide range of tires, as a hooked rim might, while also trimming some weight and material, which are the benefits that come with hookless rims. The Levante are refined wheels for bashing around on rough routes. (*campagnolo.com*)

Reynolds **Blacklabel Aero 65 DB** $2,990 G

The 65-mm deep rims of the Reynolds Blacklabel Aero 65 DB do a good job of cutting through the wind and maintaining stability in crosswinds. The wheels employ the company's Dispersive Effect Termination rim profile, which is Reynolds' take on the airfoil shape for hoops. The 19-mm inner rim width is a bit conservative, but should work with the most common road tire widths. Industry Nine makes the hubs. In the freehub, there are three pawls providing six degrees of engagement. The company says the wheelset weighs 1,600 g. (*damourbicycle.com*)

Bontrager **Aeolus Pro 37** $2,000 H

The Aeolus Pro 37 are the second-in-line after the RSL 37, but their performance is almost on par with the top dogs. The RSL is lighter and $1,650 more expensive than the Pro, but it's pretty tough to detect immediate performance differences between the two. (At least, I found it tough.) Both have the same aero profiles and use DT Aerolite spokes. Both have 21-mm inner rim widths. On the rear Pro wheel is a DT Swiss 350 hub. The set of Aeolus Pro 37 wheels come in at a respectable 1,505 g. They are a prime upgrade for a climber's bike. (*trekbikes.com*)—*MP*

G

AERO
AERO
REYNOLDS
REYNOLDS

H

BONTRAGER
BONTRAGER
AEOLUS
AEOLUS

2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

ROAD TIRES

Veloflex
Corsa EVO
$100

The Corsa EVO is a supple tire by Italian brand Veloflex. It uses an open-tubular design, taking construction cues from sewn-up tubulars, but for clincher rims. Its listed thread count is crazy high, 320 t.p.i., which will make for some smooth rolling over pavement. A size 25c tire weighs in at 220 g. (*logicasport.com*)

Goodyear
Vector 4Seasons
$105

The Vector 4Seasons tire is your tread for spring (and, well, the other seasons, too). As the snow retreats, it dumps all kinds of tire-slicing crud at the side of the road. The tire's Armor Protection that runs bead to bead and Shield Protection under the tread work to keep that stuff from cutting through to the 120 t.p.i. casing. Goodyear's compound is the Silca4, which performs well on wet roads. A 32c clincher tire comes in at 285 g. The tubeless version is 105 g heavier (but you don't need a tube, remember) and costs $110. (*rlanctot.com*)

Bontrager
R4 Classics
$115

The R4 Classics is a durable tire for rolling quickly along punishing roads. Hard-Case Lite, Bontrager's puncture protection, lies beneath the tread. It's lightweight, as its name suggests, and doesn't hinder the supple 320 t.p.i. casing. The 28c clincher tire weighs 290 g. (*trekbikes.com*)—*MP*

Photos: Hiep Vu

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GRAVEL TIRES

Cadex
GX
$110

Debuting roughly a year ago, the GX is Cadex's all-purpose gravel tire. Currently, it's only available in a 40c width, which weighs 445 g. The centre knobs are low and fast-rolling, while the larger side knobs grab well in the corners. Run this 700c tire on any hookless rim, but if you have the Cadex AR 35 Disc wheels, you'll find the tubeless setup process startlingly easy. (*cadex-cycling.com*)

Maxxis
Receptor
$95

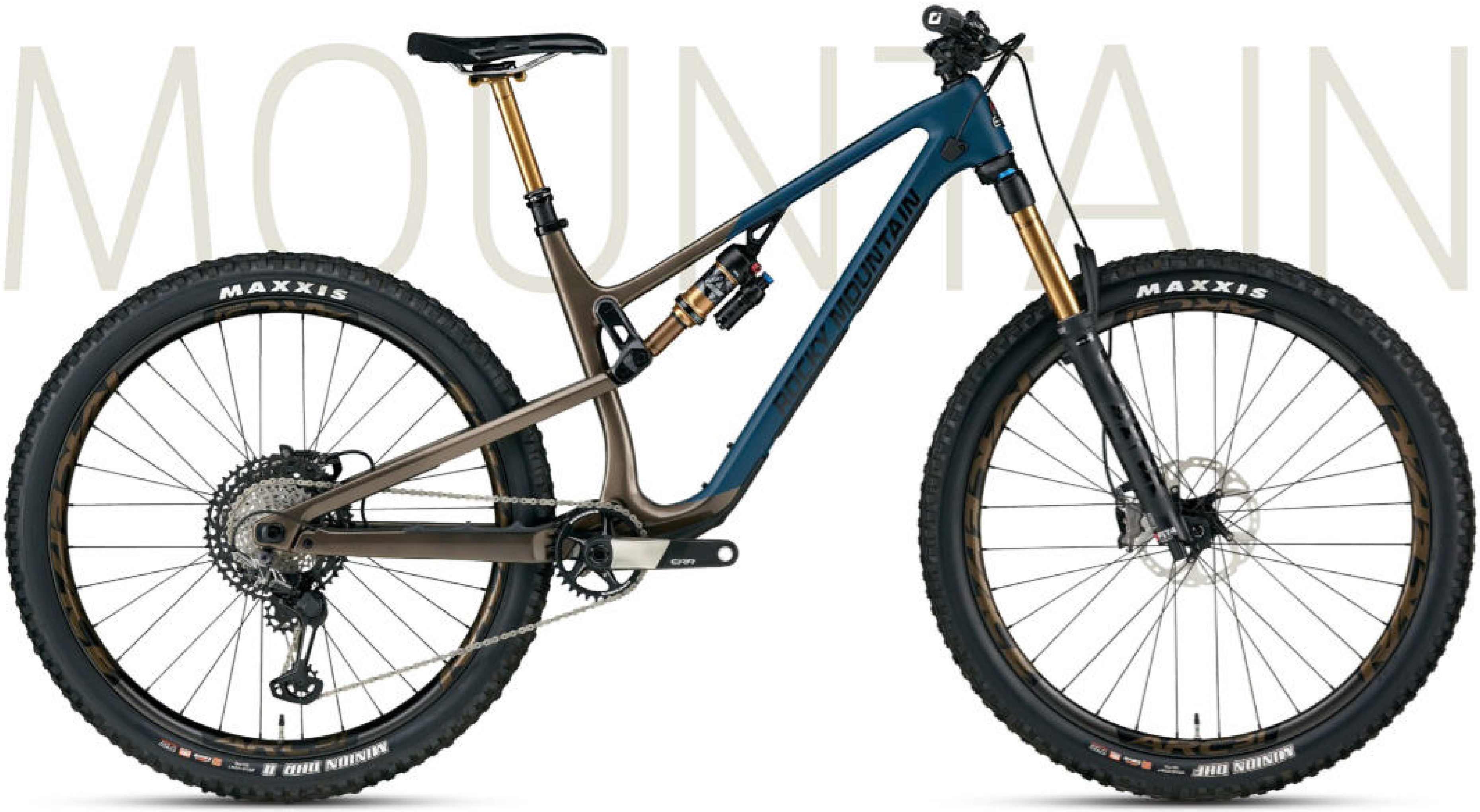
If you require more speed and a little less bite from your treads, the 700c x 40c Maxxis Receptor will have you rolling over pavement and light gravel quickly. The tire has a knurled pattern throughout its main contact patch and knobs at the sides, so you can turn with confidence. It weighs in at roughly 441 g. The company's EXO fabric within the sidewalls keeps cuts at bay. (*maxxis.com*)

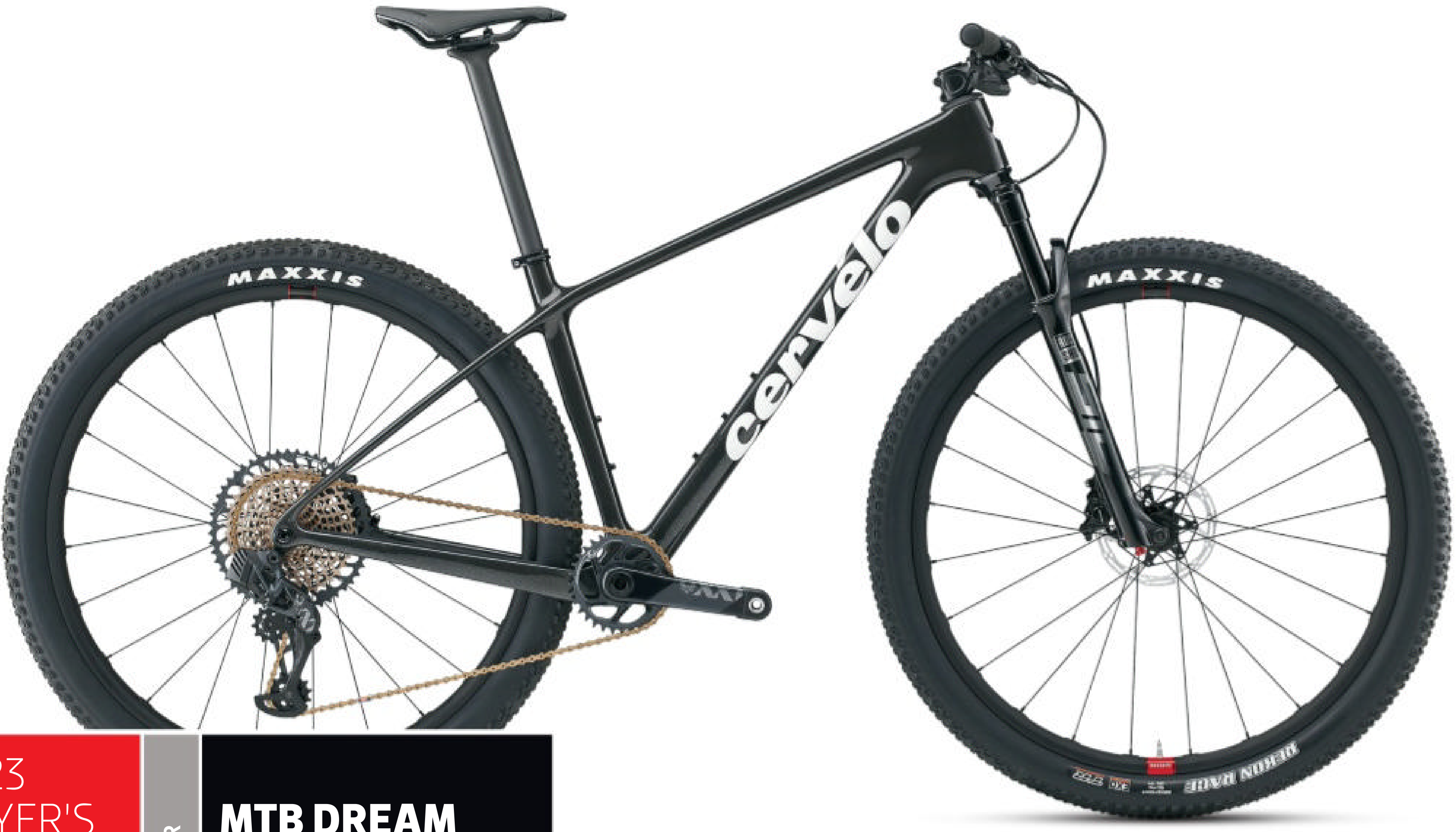
Vittoria
Terreno Mix
$90

What 25c is to road tires, 40c is to gravel. So, the 700c x 38c Terreno Mix might seem a tad slim, but it has the grip where it counts. (Tire nerds, you'll notice that the tread's ETRTO number is 40-622. That usually signifies a 40c width. It seems the company is a bit conservative with the nominal dimension. But you have calipers to check the tire once it's on your wheel, don't you? You nerds.) According to Vittoria, the alternating chevron- and arrow-shape lugs in the centre of the tire move mud and dirt to the open spaces to their sides, which allows the gunk to clear quickly. (*ogc.ca*)—*MP*

CADEX GX 170 TPI
700 x 40C
(40 - 622)
TUBELESS SYSTEM
30-50 psi (2.1-3.4 bar)
HOOKLESS COMPATIBLE
MAXXIS RECEPTOR
700x40c / 35-60 PSI
120 TPI
EXO
TR
TUBELESS READY
vittoria TERRENO MIX
TUBELESS READY
GRAPHENE 2.0
38c

MOUNTAIN





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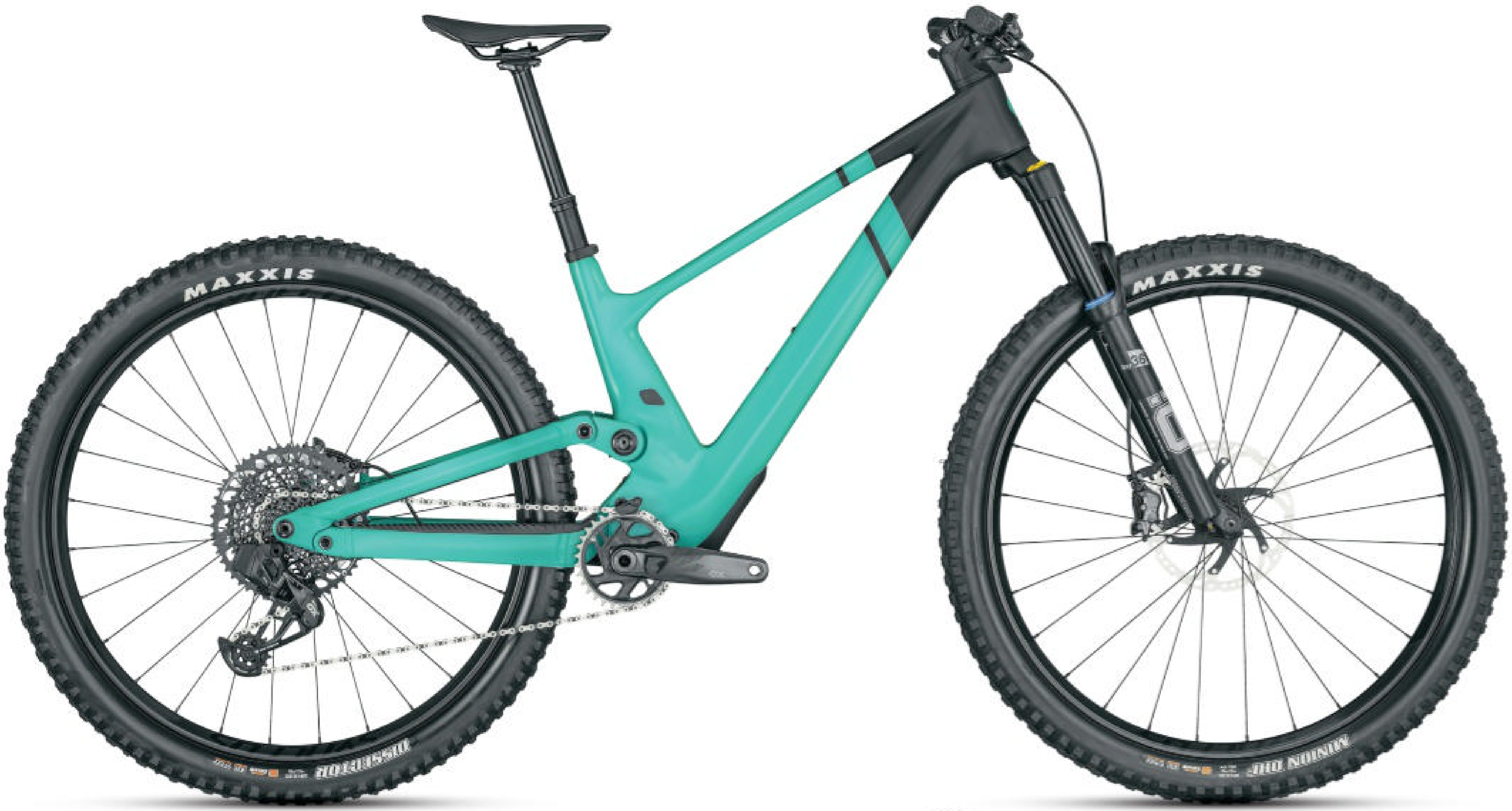
MTB DREAM MACHINES

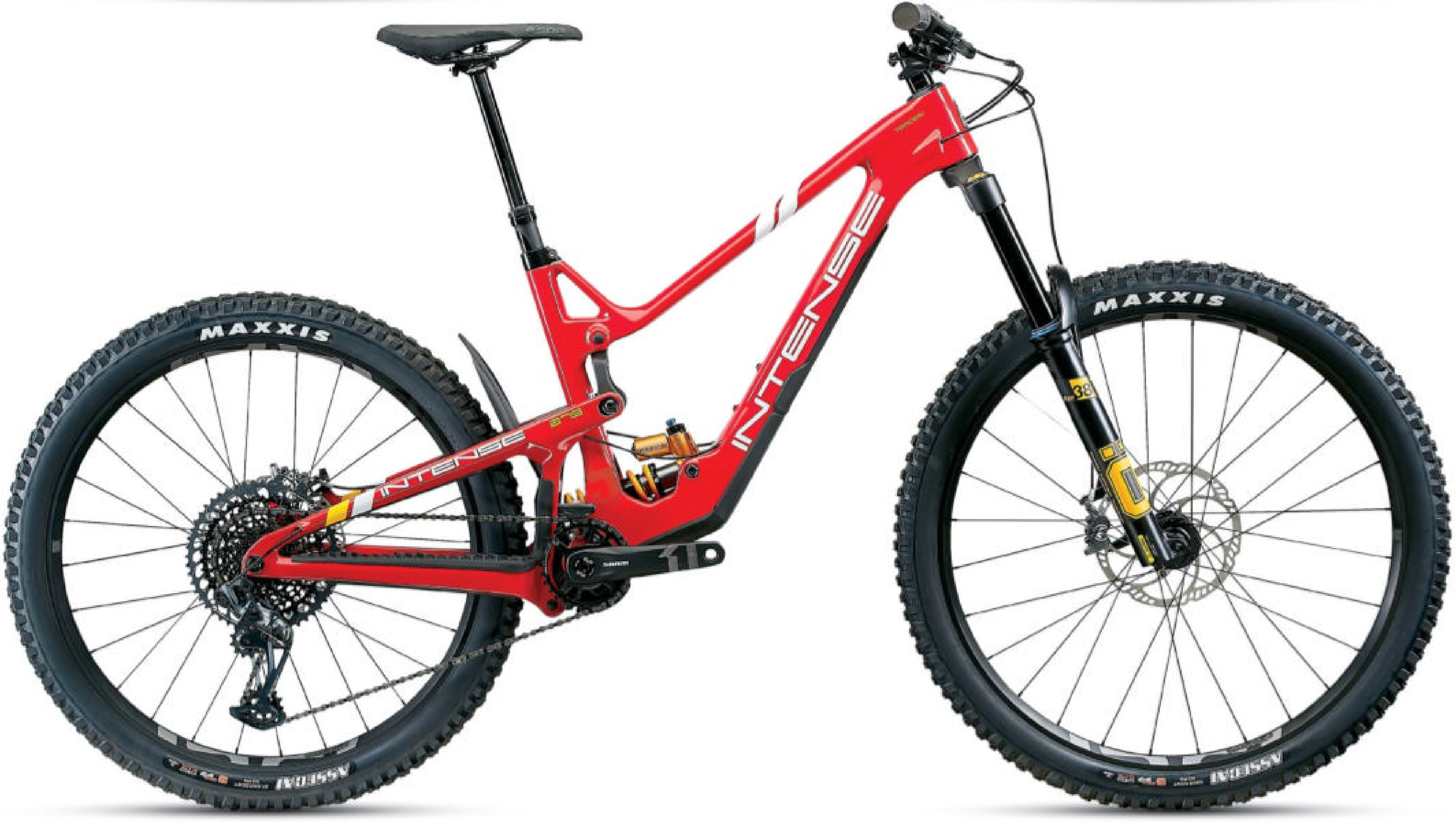
Rocky Mountain Instinct Carbon 90 $12,999

The Instinct Carbon 90 is Rocky Mountain's premier trail bike. The latest version got a significant makeover, with updated geometry, frame features and suspension. Sizes extra large to medium come with 29" wheels. The extra small runs 27.5" hoops. The small frame can go with either wheel size, whichever works best for the rider. There's 150 mm of front travel from the Fox 36 Float EVOL fork and 140 mm out of the Fox Float X Factory shock. Component highlights include a full 12-speed Shimano XTR drivetrain mated with Race Face Era cranks, Race Face ARC carbon-fibre wheels and a Fox Transfer Factory Series dropper post. Geometry on the Instinct is adjustable from slack to steep thanks to Rocky Mountain's Ride-9 suspension system. There are two positions for the rear axle, which changes chainstay length. All the customization will let every rider find their happy place. (*bikes.com*)

Cervélo ZHT-5 $12,650

Cervélo has put its skills for making fast road and cyclocross bikes to good use with the design of a World Cup-level XC race bike. This lightweight carbon hardtail puts an emphasis on speed. It has 100 mm travel from the RockShox SID fork and rolls on 2.4" Maxxis Rekon Race tires. The bike sports modern (for a race hardtail) geometry, including a 69-degree head-tube angle, 457-mm reach (size large) and 430-mm-long chainstays. The SRAM XX1 AXS components are about as top-shelf as they come. It won't be this bike's fault if you don't make it onto the podium. (*cervelo.com*)





Scott Genius ST 910 $10,000

Something looks out of place when you first see the Scott Genius ST 910. The rear suspension linkage is visible, but where's the shock? Well, it's hidden inside the frame. The 150 mm of rear travel is delivered via a Fox Float X Nude shock that's wrapped in the frame, in front of the bottom bracket. This setup lowers the bike's centre of gravity, while the oversize shock compartment delivers additional stiffness and protects the component from the elements. The other parts on the ST 910 are largely SRAM GX Eagle AXS, with the addition of Shimano XT brakes, an integrated Syncros bar and stem, as well as a Syncros Revelstoke 2.0 wheelset. (*micasport.com*)

Intense Tracer S $9,699

The Tracer S is Intense's top-shelf enduro ride, a mixed-wheel platform with high-end parts for racing. Full carbon-fibre front and rear triangles are mated with 170 mm of Öhlins front air and coil rear suspension, SRAM drivetrain parts, alloy e-thirteen LG1 wheels (29" front/27.5" rear), and Magura MT7 Pro brakes. Added features include the Chad in-frame storage system and flip-chip adjustment to change the bike's geometry. The suspension design is Intense's own JS Tuned system. The Tracer uses the enduro-specific JS Tuned setup that makes the suspension supple in the early stages of travel, while doing a good job of keeping things from bottoming out. Each bike also comes with a tool box, which is a nice touch. (*intensecycles.com*)—*SK*

MAXXIS
MAXXIS
MINION DHR II
ASSEGAI

Giant Reign Advanced Pro 29 2 $5,599

When you need a bike built for riding both down the mountain quickly and getting up it a good clip, the Giant Reign Advanced Pro remains a solid option with plenty of features for the price. The frame is made with the company's second-tier Advanced composite, featuring 146 mm of rear travel from the updated Maestro suspension. This build is matched to a 170-mm RockShox ZEB Select fork. The trail bike rolls on Giant's AM 29 alloy wheels with a tubeless-ready 2.5" Maxxis Assegai tire up front and 2.4" Maxxis Minion DHR at the back. The 1 x 12 drivetrain features SRAM NX Eagle shifters, rear derailleur, chain and cassette with a Truvativ Descendent crankset and Shimano hydraulic disc brakes. You also get a TranzX dropper seatpost, Giant saddle, stem and composite handlebar. Available in four sizes. (*giant-bicycles.com*)

vittoria MEZCAL
MEZCAL

BMC Fourstroke Four $6,599

BMC's Fourstroke cross country line has been updated for 2023. The company's APS dual-link suspension was modified, allowing the RockShox SIDLuxe Select+ shock 100 mm of travel. The frame can also accommodate two bottle cages. The Four is at the lower end of the Fourstroke range, but still offers a stellar carbon-fibre frame with internal cable routing and a RockShox SID SL RL fork. The drivetrain is Shimano's 1 x 12 SLX and Deore setup with matching brakes providing stopping power to the Shimano SHL280S rims and 2.35" Vittoria Mezcal tires. This bike is scheduled to land in Canada in October. (*bmc-switzerland.com*)

Chromag Darco $6,850

B.C.'s Chromag bikes put its two decades of experience building steel bikes behind the full-suspension Darco. Named in honour of longtime mechanic D'Arcy Burke, who passed away in 2020, the bike is the company's first full-suspension bike. (Well, first for adults. Let's not forget the Minor Threat.) The Darco frame has a 4130 chromoly steel front triangle with aluminum chainstays for added strength. The G2 build has 150 mm of travel up front by way of a RockShox Lyrik Select+ fork and the rear end features 120 mm from a RockShox Super Deluxe Air Ultimate shock. The SRAM GX Eagle drivetrain is paired with SRAM G2 RSC brakes. Wheels are Chromag's own 29" Phase30 with R4 hubs that are wrapped in Maxxis Minion tires. There's a Rockshox Reverb seatpost and prime Chromag cockpit parts. Available in two colours and five sizes. (*chromagbikes.com*)

Intense Primer Expert $6,299

Available midsummer, the Primer Expert can handle a range of trails. Offered in three colourways and four sizes, the 29" full carbon trail bike has two geometry settings—depending on the type of ride you're looking for—through its flip-chip feature. It has 140 mm of travel at the back from the Fox Performance Float X shock and 150 mm up front from a Fox 36 Performance Float fork. The 1 x 12 drivetrain is SRAM's NX Eagle setup and stopping power comes from four-piston TRP Trail Evo hydraulic brakes. The e-thirteen LG1 Enduro wheels have Intense hubs and 2.4" Kenda Pinner tires. (*intensecycles.com*)

Commencal T.E.M.P.O. $4,000

New for 2023, the T.E.M.P.O. is Commencal's entry into the short-travel trail bike market. The all-aluminum 29er has 125 mm of travel at the rear from a RockShox Deluxe Select+ shock and 140 mm up front from a RockShox Pike fork. It has a mix of SRAM NX and SX Eagle parts for the drivetrain with four-piston TRP Trail Evo disc brakes. The T.E.M.P.O. rolls on Spank Spike Race 33 rims with a combination of 2.4" Maxxis Dissector and DHR II tires. It also features a Ride Alpha stem and handlebar, a KS Rage-i dropper post and a SDG Bel-Air V3 saddle. Commencal offers the T.E.M.P.O. in four sizes. (*commencalcanada.com*)—*DD*

MAXXIS
MAXXIS
CHROMAG
CHROMAG
CHROMAG

KENDA
KENDA
INTENSE
PINNER

MAXXIS
MAXXIS
COMMENCAL
TEMPO

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MTB PRICE POINT

YT Capra Core 1 $3,799

The YT Capra Core 1 gives enduro riders the choice between 29" wheels, or "MX"—the company's take on a mix of a 29" front and 27.5" rear. The Rockshox Zeb Base offers 170 mm of travel, with a Super Deluxe Select R taking rear shock duties. SRAM DB8 brakes add value to the build along with the SX and NX Eagle drivetrain parts. The aluminum frame boasts an asymmetrical wing for added stiffness and enough room for a water bottle. Five sizes are available in both black magic and sludge green colourways. (*ca.yt-industries.com*)

Liv Pique 29 $3,449

The Pique 29 is Liv's entry-level full-suspension MTB. The alloy XC frame is paired with a Rockshox Recon RL Silver fork with 100 mm travel. The short 438-mm chainstays keep the bike nimble and 68.5-degree head-tube angle ensures a fast and efficient XC posture. Shimano Deore drivetrain and brakes inspire confidence, along with the Giant Contact Switch dropper post that comes stock. The Maxxis Rekon Race tires (2.35" front, 2.25" rear) are fast-rolling and ship tubeless-ready, just add sealant. Four sizes are available, including extra-small, which is rare for a 29er these days. (*liv-cycling.com*)

Norco Fluid FS A4 $2,999

Norco's Fluid FS A4 is a full-suspension alloy trail bike sporting a slack 65-degree head-tube angle and Rockshox Recon RL Silver 140-mm fork. Generous standover clearance and SDG Tellis dropper post are sure to help you build your skills on the trails. The frame's 130 mm of rear travel is taken care of by an X-Fusion 02 Pro R shock. Four-piston Tektro HD-M535 brakes do the stopping. Use Norco's Ride Aligned website to fine-tune your personal setup—including suspension setting, stem length, and even recommended front and rear tire pressures. Also noteworthy, the bike is available in XXL, so worry not if you're 6'7". (*norco.com*)—*JW*

SPHERIK
CAKE EATER
TERRENE

Spherik SFC $4,200

Fat bikes are a lot of fun in the snow, especially when they're light and agile, like the Spherik SFC. This Quebec-designed full-carbon bike is meant to get you from A to B quickly, so it forgoes front suspension in the name of a lighter weight and ride efficiency. There are three component packages to choose from for the SFC, with this particular model sitting right in the middle. You get SRAM GX Eagle drivetrain parts, Sun Ringle Mulefat rims, 27.5 x 4.5 Terrene Cake Eater rubber, a SDG Tellis dropper post and a carbon Torayca HM T-700 rigid fork. (*spherikbike.com*)

KONA
AVALANCHE
RACEFACE

Kona Woo $2,999

The Woo is a no-nonsense aluminum fat bike that will be a ton of fun in the snow. The fork is a Kona Wo Fat Carbon Disc, which will take the edge off trail chatter but might leave you feeling the larger hits. Drivetrain and brakes are all Shimano (largely Deore), while saddle, grips, stem, bar and seatpost are from Kona. The 26 x 4.8 Vee tires are mounted on Sun Ringle Mulefut 80 tubeless-ready rims. You'll want run those tires tubeless to save weight and add to the cushion factor. Add a dropper post to the bike to make the most of off-road adventures. (*konaworld.com*)

Garneau Gros Louis 3 $1,850

The Garneau Gros Louis 3 is the epitome of a value-priced fat bike. You get everything you need and nothing you don't with this aluminum sled. Garneau has kept the price low by spec'ing a largely generic nine-speed drivetrain and a number of components from Caribou. One up-spec item that's very nice to see is the SRAM Level hydraulic disc brakes. Another bonus is the 27.5 x 4.5 Terrene Cake Eater tires—larger wheels do make things easier in the snow. There's an XS bike, which is great as this isn't a common size in the fat bike market. (*louisgarneau.com*)—*SK*

eMTB

Trek Fuel EXe 9.9 $18,300

Trek spared no expenses with this bike. The standard 29" full carbon Trek Fuel EX with 150/140 mm of travel gets amped thanks to the highly efficient TQ-HPR50 motor. The Fuel EXe also features a SRAM XX1 Eagle AXS wireless drivetrain and RockShox Reverb AXS dropper post. The motor and drivetrain aren't the only electronic parts of the bike: Quarq TyreWiz monitors your tire pressure, while RockShox's AirWiz checks on your fork and shock pressure. The 360-Wh battery helps the motor produce 50 Nm of torque. Sure, there are motors with more power, but with the Fuel EXe, Trek has made one of the lightest eMTBs on the market (40.68 lb. in size medium) that is more playful on the trails. (*trekbikes.com*)

Devinci E-Spartan $8,799

Devinci bills the E-Spartan as an "e-beast," which it definitely is. This aluminum-frame 180/170-mm travel monster is powered by Shimano's EP8 motor, which can churn out 85 Nm of torque. The long-travel fork is paired with a slack 64-degree head-tube angle, so you'll be able to rip descents, and then use the motor and 12-speed Shimano Deore drivetrain to head back to the top. With a 725-Wh battery and a claimed range of 135 km, the E-Spartan has the juice to self-shuttle all day. Divinci uses its e-mountain bike-optimized Split Pivot system, separating acceleration forces from braking forces so you'll have a smooth ride, up and down. (*devinci.com*)

Cube Stereo Hybrid 140 HPC SLX $8,449

The redesigned Stereo Hybrid from Cube features a large 750-Wh battery, which powers the Bosch CX drive unit. It also gives you an impressive 85 Nm of torque, which will flatten out most hills. In addition, you get a very capable 150/140-mm trail bike with a carbon front triangle, Fox 34 Rhythm fork and Float DPS EVOL shock, Shimano XT and Deore components, and 2.6" Schwalbe Hans Dampf rubber. The XS bike comes with 27.5" wheels, while all other sizes get 29" wheels. Shimano XT brakes bring those wheels to a stop. To get the saddle out of the way on a descent, there's the Cube dropper post. (*cube-bikes.ca*)

Moustache Samedi 29 Trail 3 Smart System $7,999

The Samedi 29 Trail 3 Smart System, from French ebike brand Moustache, is a 150-mm-travel aluminum trail bike with a Bosch Performance Line CX Smart System motor that puts out 85 Nm courtesy of the 750-Wh battery. There are some interesting component choices on the Samedi, most notably the Marzocchi Bomber Z2 fork, the Moustache Magic Grip Control shock, a KS 900i dropper post and Moustache house-brand wheels. Shimano's journeyman 11-speed Deore drivetrain rounds out the spec. Geometry numbers are a little more on the old-school end of the spectrum. (*moustachebikes.com*)

Gasgas G Trail 2.0 $5,599

Gasgas is a Spanish trials and enduro motorcycle manufacturer that has recently turned its attention to the ebike market. The G Trail 2.0 is an aluminum 29er with 150 mm of travel front and rear thanks to a RockShox Revelation RC fork and Deluxe Select+ shock. The bike is powered by a Yamaha PW-ST motor that puts out 70 Nm via a 630-Wh Simplo battery. Derailleur, shifters (SX Eagle) and brakes (DB8) are by SRAM, but the majority of other components are from Gasgas, including the crankset, hubs, bars and dropper post. This bike is perfect for Gasgas fans who want a little human-powered input on their two-wheeled adventures. (*gasgas.com*)—SK

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D

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GEAR

MOUNTAIN BIKE WHEELS

Shimano **Deore XT Trail** $590 A

Simple and reliable, the 29" Shimano Deore XT Trail wheelset can take anything you throw at it. They have Boost spacing: a 110 x 15 mm front thru axle and 148 x 12 mm at the rear. Both wheels are built on Shimano's proven XT hubs with Center Lock rotor mounts. The alloy XT Trail rims have a 30-mm internal rim width, 35-mm external and 20-mm depth. These wheels are a great price and perform well on the trails. (*bike.shimano.com*)

FSA **KFX i25** $2,700 B

FSA's KFX i25 wheelset is lightweight and durable, well-suited for a range of trails. The Tubeless-compatible wheels have 29" asymmetric carbon-fibre rims with 25-mm inner width and 30-mm outer and a depth of 30 mm. Everything weighs in at 1,566 g. The wheels are built by hand around FSA hubs with Center Lock rotor mounts. (*fullspeedahead.com*)

Bontrager **Kovee Elite 30** $1,330 C

You remember Keith Bontrager's old saying: strong, light, cheap—pick two. But with the Bontrager Kovee Elite 30 wheelset, you get lightweight carbon-fibre hoops that are built to handle cross country racing. Their price is quite good for a composite set. The tubeless-ready 29" wheels with Boost spacing have no weight limit and are warrantied for life. At the rear, Grand Forza spokes are laced to Bontrager's Rapid Drive 108 XC hub. The wheels come ready to run six-bolt rotors. The rims feature a 29-mm internal width, 35-mm external width and 22-mm depth while also offering a new wider hook bead for more durability. (*trekbikes.com*)

Syncros **Silverton SL** $6,000 D

Syncros turned some heads in the XC racing world when it took the wraps off its one-piece carbon wheelset in 2018. On each wheel, the hub flanges, spokes and rim are all moulded into a single unit. Three years after the launch, the company put out the Silverton SL with a 30-mm inner-rim width. Also in 2021, Tom Pidcock won Olympic gold on the 29" tubeless-ready wheels weighing just 1,280 g for the set. The only metal on the wheels are aluminum hub inserts and the custom DT Swiss 110/148 mm Boost hubs with Center Lock rotor mounts. If you're looking to take your XC racing game to the next level, the Silverton SL are the best of the best. (*micasport.com*)

E

F

Zipp 3Zero Moto $2,800 E

Inspired by two-wheeled motorsports, the 29" Zipp 3Zero Moto is a carbon enduro/trail wheelset intentionally designed with a single-wall rim. This design gives each wheel built-in flex. As you lean into a corner, the flex improves traction and allows for faster speeds. There's also a smoother ride and the ability to run lower tire pressures. It's also available in a 27.5" wheel size. Both options are equipped with the ZM2 freehub with 12 pawls and 132 points of engagement. The 3Zero Moto is also available in eight colour options. The wheelsets are eMTB approved and come with a lifetime warranty. (*sram.com*)

Hunt Proven Carbon Race XC $1,589 F

With the Proven Carbon Race XC wheels, Hunt, a U.K.-based company, balances durability with saving weight. The 29" carbon-fibre hoops come in at 1,469 g. The rim dimensions: 30-mm internal width, 36-mm outer and 22-mm depth. The wheels have an H-lock bead setup designed to make tubeless installation easy and secure. They have Boost spacing and run Center Lock rotors. You also get lifetime crash replacement. (*huntbikewheels.cc*)—*DD*

Photos (tires): Hiep Vu

MOUNTAIN BIKE TIRES

Maxxis Forekaster $111

The Forekaster was originally designed as a cross country tire for soggy conditions, but Maxxis beefed it up for down-country (100 to 130 mm) bikes that mix cross country's speed and trail's descending. The 29" tire has a width of 2.4" and EXO sidewall protection. This tubeless-ready tread can be run front or rear and is rated for all trail conditions. Claimed weight for the 60 t.p.i. tire is 945 g. Unfortunately, the Forekaster is only available in this one size. (*maxxis.com*)

Pirelli Scorpion Enduro M $126

Pirelli isn't just performance car tires; the company also produces some good-looking mountain bike treads. The Scorpion Enduro M is designed to perform on weekend rides or at the races. It includes features such as the SmartGrip Gravity compound, which, unlike the rubber of most other brands, isn't a mix of compounds. The HardWall reinforced casing is enduro-specific (in contrast with the company's XC ProWall casing) to prevent pinch flats at low pressures. Claimed weight for the 60 t.p.i., 29 x 2.4 tire is 1,100 g. (*hlc.bike/ca*)—*SK*

FOREKASTER
29X2.40WT
50 PSI
EXO PROTECTION
TR
TUBELESS READY

SCORPION
TM ENDURO
M
HARD WALL

2023
BUYER'S
GUIDE

GEAR

SADDLES

PRO **Stealth Offroad** $250

Created for mountain biking or gravel racing, the Stealth Offroad is PRO's light saddle for anything-but-smooth surfaces. Yet even with such low weight, 203 g for the 142-mm model, this saddle does not compromise the comfort required during long aggressive rides. PRO starts with a moulded carbon-reinforced polymer shell that's padded with lightweight EVA foam and covered with a durable polyurethane fabric. A deep channel reduces pressure on sensitive tissue, while the stainless-steel rails provide durability in extreme conditions. As with all PRO saddles, the Stealth Offroad is compatible with all of the company's saddle accessories allowing for the simplified storage of small essentials. (*pro-bikegear.com*)

Fizik **Tempo Argo R3** $205

The Tempo Argo has been specifically engineered to meet the needs of your endurance road rides. The 150-mm-wide saddle (also available in 160 mm) features a shape that places you in the optimal position for increased stability and improved weight distribution. Fizik specs a short overall length (260 mm), which means you can sit farther forward during strenuous efforts without creating pressure on sensitive tissues. The addition of a generous anatomical cut-out, slightly softer padding and a compliant carbon-reinforced nylon shell ensure even greater comfort on longer rides. (*fizik.com*)

Bontrager **Aeolus RSL** $425

With its full-length channel, the Aeolus RSL saddle provides exceptional comfort and protection for sensitive soft tissues. The saddle's minimalist shape, combined with a carbon shell, oversized carbon rails and thin padding, keep the weight down to a feathery 151 g (according to the *Canadian Cycling Magazine* scale) for the 145-mm size and about 5 g more for the 155-mm version. The saddle's wide nose and shorter overall length (250 mm) also reduce pressure during hard efforts in the drops. It's this combination of weight savings and comfort that makes the Aeolus RSL saddle a top choice for competitive road cyclists. (*trekbikes.com*)

Syncros **Tofino R SL** $440

Unlike most superlight saddles that are targeted at the elite road racing community, the Tofino R SL is focused on endurance and MTB riders who prefer a slightly more upright riding position and greater comfort. To achieve this goal, Syncros optimizes the saddle's shape for contact toward the middle and back of the saddle. The addition of a pressure-relieving channel helps with a lot of saddle time during longer rides. The component is so light (148 g) thanks to its one-piece carbon base-and-rail construction that helps shave grams without compromising strength and durability. (*syncros.com*)—*Gus Alexandropoulos*

STEALTH OFFROAD
fizik
TOFINO

Photos: Hiep Vu

2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

ROAD SHOES

Rapha **Women's Pro Team** $520

The most eye-catching feature of the women's Pro Team shoes is the 3D woven Powerweave upper. This unique textile not only offers a distinct esthetic, but, thanks to its seamless construction, also provides a supportive foot-hugging fit while remaining supremely breathable. Rapha specs two micro-adjustable BOA dials that ensure a locked-in feel and are easily adjusted even on the bike. All of this is mated to a full-length carbon sole for exceptional power transfer during the most intense efforts. (*rapha.cc*)

Shimano **S-Phyre RC903** $630

As the new flagship model in Shimano's road cycling shoe program, the S-Phyre RC903 provides increased comfort, comes in at a lower weight and features an overall sleeker look when compared with its predecessor. The new shoe features a sophisticated multi-material upper that provides good breathability, support and fit. The S-Phyre RC903 also employs two BOA Li2 dials for a top fit, even during the hardest sprints. A more subtle improvement comes from the new anti-twist stabilizing heel cup that secures your heel during challenging efforts. Finally, all this technology sits on top of a carbon-fibre sole for optimal power transfer and efficiency. (*ride.shimano.com*)

DMT **KR0** $690

For years, knit-fabric footwear uppers have been the norm in other sports because of their low weight, excellent breathability, lack of hot-spot-inducing seams and their ability to easily conform to the foot for supreme comfort. With all these wins, it's not surprising that DMT is using this construction on its KRo shoes. Yet even with all these benefits, this type of upper construction can have some limitations: the material lacks the structure required to adequately support the foot over the sole and it may not be as durable as more conventional (and heavier) upper materials. Recognizing these shortcomings, DMT bolsters the KRo shoes with integrated webbing bands for support. The company also adds low-profile overlays on the lower part of the shoes, which help centre the foot while increasing abrasion resistance and durability. To ensure excellent power transfer, this sophisticated upper is mated to a lightweight carbon outsole that features multiple vents for additional comfort when riding in warm conditions. (*mvcgroup.com*)

Fizik **Tempo Decos Iridescent** $400

If you want uncompromising performance and stand-out-in-a-crowd looks, you'll appreciate the Tempo Decos Iridescent. From a performance perspective, these sleek shoes feature a full carbon sole for optimal power transfer, a BOA Li2 closure system that allows for a secure and easily adjustable fit and a polyurethane-laminated upper that conforms to the foot while providing the necessary support on longer rides; all good things. Esthetically, it's hard to ignore the shoes' eye-catching iridescent colour. The result is a pair of shoes that deliver a blend of performance and bling that your riding partners will envy. (*fizik.com*)—*GA*

2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

MOUNTAIN BIKE SHOES

BOA
BOA
GIRO

Leatt **Shoe 3.0 Flat** $185

If you are an enduro or downhill rider looking for the ideal combination of performance and comfort, you'll appreciate the Leatt Shoe 3.0 Flat. The new for 2023 shoes feature Leatt's RideGrip Pro rubber compound outsole that's optimized for grip on short pins, resulting in exceptional control during fast descents or challenging technical sections. The rubber compound is softer than Leatt's standard offering, ensuring better grip in wet conditions. Leatt also specs a medium-stiff sole that strikes the right balance between pedalling efficiency and off-the-bike walking comfort. For the uppers, the company employs a durable synthetic leather that sheds mud and conforms to the foot, while the neoprene collar provides ankle support and protection. Finally, the tried-and-true lacing closure allows you to fine-tune the fit for maximum control and comfort. (*leatt.com*)

Giro **Formula Pro** $470

Packed with innovative features, the Formula Pro shoes are a solid choice if you are looking for performance without compromising versatility. Giro starts with a light yet durable synthetic upper that's bolstered with overlays for greater abrasion resistance. The addition of two BOA dials provides a foot-hugging fit that you can adjust easily, even when you are clipped in. The outsole consists of a durable medium durometer rubber that's still sufficiently grippy in wet conditions. This material is moulded over a carbon-composite outsole that consists of smaller lugs nestled beneath the rubber. This construction provides more support for the lugs resulting in improved traction while also reducing the chance of sole delamination. (*ogc.ca*)—*GA*

Photos: Hiep Vu

2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

GRAVEL SHOES

Shimano **RX8R** $430

The RX8R offers additional protection when riding in challenging conditions with the knit cuff that protects your ankles against abrasion and prevents debris from entering the shoe. For the upper, Shimano specs a supple synthetic leather that conforms to the foot, provides support and dries quickly. This material is mated to a stiff yet lightweight carbon composite sole that ensures efficient energy transfer. Finally, a low-profile BOA closure and single hook-and-loop forefoot strap create an easily adjustable, locked-in fit. (*ride.shimano.com*)

Pearl Izumi **Expedition** $230

These versatile shoes are a solid option for extended gravel riding or cross country mountain bike trails. Pearl Izumi starts with a lightweight yet durable synthetic upper that is heavily perforated for ventilation. The upper also features glued overlays that add structure and support without bulky or hot-spot-inducing seams found in more conventional footwear construction. For the closure system, there's a BOA dial and hook-and-loop forefoot strap that offer easy adjustability both on and off the bike. This upper is connected to a nylon composite sole that provides excellent power transfer while still having the necessary flex required for walking. Finally, Pearl Izumi adds an EVA insert in the heel that reduces energy-robbing vibrations during long rides. (*pearlizumi.ca*)

Garneau **Carbon XC** $350

Garneau's new Carbon XC shoes offer a number of innovative features that you'll appreciate as you tear down a gravel road. As with many of Garneau's higher-end shoes, the Carbon XCs feature X-Comfort Zone technology. This construction strategically places a stretch area on the uppers to better accommodate wider feet and reduce pressure during longer rides. The upper also features multiple mesh panels, ensuring excellent ventilation in warmer conditions. Garneau specs a proven BOA Li2 closure for a secure fit. All this innovation sits on top of a carbon composite outsole that delivers excellent power transfer while still providing solid traction when your feet are on the ground. (*louisgarneau.com*)—*GA*

SHIMANO
ULTEGRA
ULTEGRA

Race Face **Atlas** $220

With its new longer and wider surface and 10 grippy adjustable pins per side, the Atlas is an excellent choice for your gravity rides. The aluminum body is available in nine colours. Each platform connects to a new spindle design that is more compatible with carbon cranks and crank boots. The pedal is easily serviceable and employs a larger-than-average internal bearing for extra durability. The pins are bottom-loading, and you can use spacers to adjust their height. (*raceface.ca*)

2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

PEDALS

Shimano **Ultegra R8000** $280

The R8000 pedals deliver the high-end performance you've come to expect from the Ultegra component group. Consisting of wide carbon-composite bodies, the R8000 offer exceptional foot support for comfort on long rides, while still delivering efficient power transfer during hard efforts. Shimano uses a stainless-steel plate that increases the pedal body's durability and reduces flex. Durability is further enhanced thanks to each pedal's wide bearing spacing. For those who need the additional clearance, Shimano offers a version sporting axles with a 4 mm increase in length. (*ride.shimano.com*)

Chromag **Pilot** $215

If you want a large-platform SPD-compatible mountain bike pedal, check out the Chromag Pilot. Chromag specs a roomy 87 x 110 mm aluminum body (available in five colours) that delivers exceptional foot support. Each pedal features four adjustable and replaceable traction pins per side for additional control in stressful or sloppy conditions. A chromoly axle system provides tried-and-true durability, and a double-sealed inner bushing and outer cartridge bearing ensure smooth performance. (*chromagbikes.com*)

CHROMAG
CHROMAG
PILOT

GARMIN
GARMIN

Garmin **Rally XC200 Pedals** $1,620

If you're a serious gravel or XC rider looking for SPD-compatible power meter pedals to monitor your power output, you'll appreciate Garmin's Rally XC200 pedals. Since the strain gauges are housed in the spindles, you can convert the pedals to the Rally RS (Shimano SPD-SL cleat compatible) and RK (Look Keo cleat compatible) platforms. As with most power meter systems, the Garmin Rally XC200 pedals can track a variety of important metrics, including left and right leg power output, time spent seated and standing, total power and cadence. Because the pedals are easily swappable (unlike some power meter systems), you can move them from bike to bike. As with most Garmin products, the Rally XC200 pedals are compatible with many items in Garmin's line. (*garmin.com*)

Look **Keo Blade Carbon** $250

With its unique carbon blade spring, the Keo Blade Carbon pedals combine exceptional retention without the weight of traditional pedal designs. Each pedal weighs 117 g. Look specs a durable 67-mm wide steel plate that sits on top of the carbon body. This plate does a great job of aiding power transfer and protecting the carbon body from wear. A chromoly steel axle offers the perfect blend of low weight and durability, while beefy bearings with multiple seals ensure consistent performance in wet weather. (*lookcycle.com*)—*GA*

Photos: Hiep Vu

BARS

RACEFACE
ATLAS

KEO BLADE
CARBON
LOOK

PRO **Tharsis 3Five Mini Rise** $235

The Tharsis 3Five Mini Rise bars are light enough for competitive XC riding without compromising the durability required for more challenging terrain. The bars use a unidirectional carbon-fibre construction that delivers compliance and strength, while keeping the weight down to 195 g. The bars also feature a 780-mm length (they can be cut down to 700 mm) as well as an oversized 35-mm clamping diameter. For optimal ergonomics, PRO specs a 10-mm rise, a nine-degree backsweep and a four-degree upsweep. (*pro-bikegear.com*)

FSA **KFX SIC** $600

For the ultimate in cross country performance, there's the FSA KFX SIC handlebar. Consisting of a carbon-fibre integrated cockpit, the KFX SIC delivers increased stiffness, a low weight and unmatched esthetics. You can also route up to five cables or hoses internally, resulting in an even cleaner and sleeker overall look. The bar is 780-mm wide, has an effective stem angle of -12 degrees, a nine-degree backsweep and a five-degree upsweep. The model here has a stem length of 65 mm. Also available are 85- and 105-mm stem lengths. (*fullspeedahead.com*)

Cadex **GX** $540

Created as a no-compromise gravel riding bar, the Cadex GX delivers the control and compliance required on fast descents and challenging climbs. The bar features a 16-degree flare, five-degree outsweep and 40-mm-long tails for optimal ergonomics and control in all riding conditions. Cadex also specs a 70-mm reach, which encourages easy transitions from the hoods to the drops. Speaking of drops, the GX bars have a shallow 115-mm drop that provides additional aero benefits without compromising control when you are headed downhill. Finally, the bars are constructed with Cadex's one-piece, no-bond manufacturing that uses high-grade carbon fibre with a precision layup process resulting in the optimal balance of low weight and high strength. (*cadex-cycling.com*)—*GA*

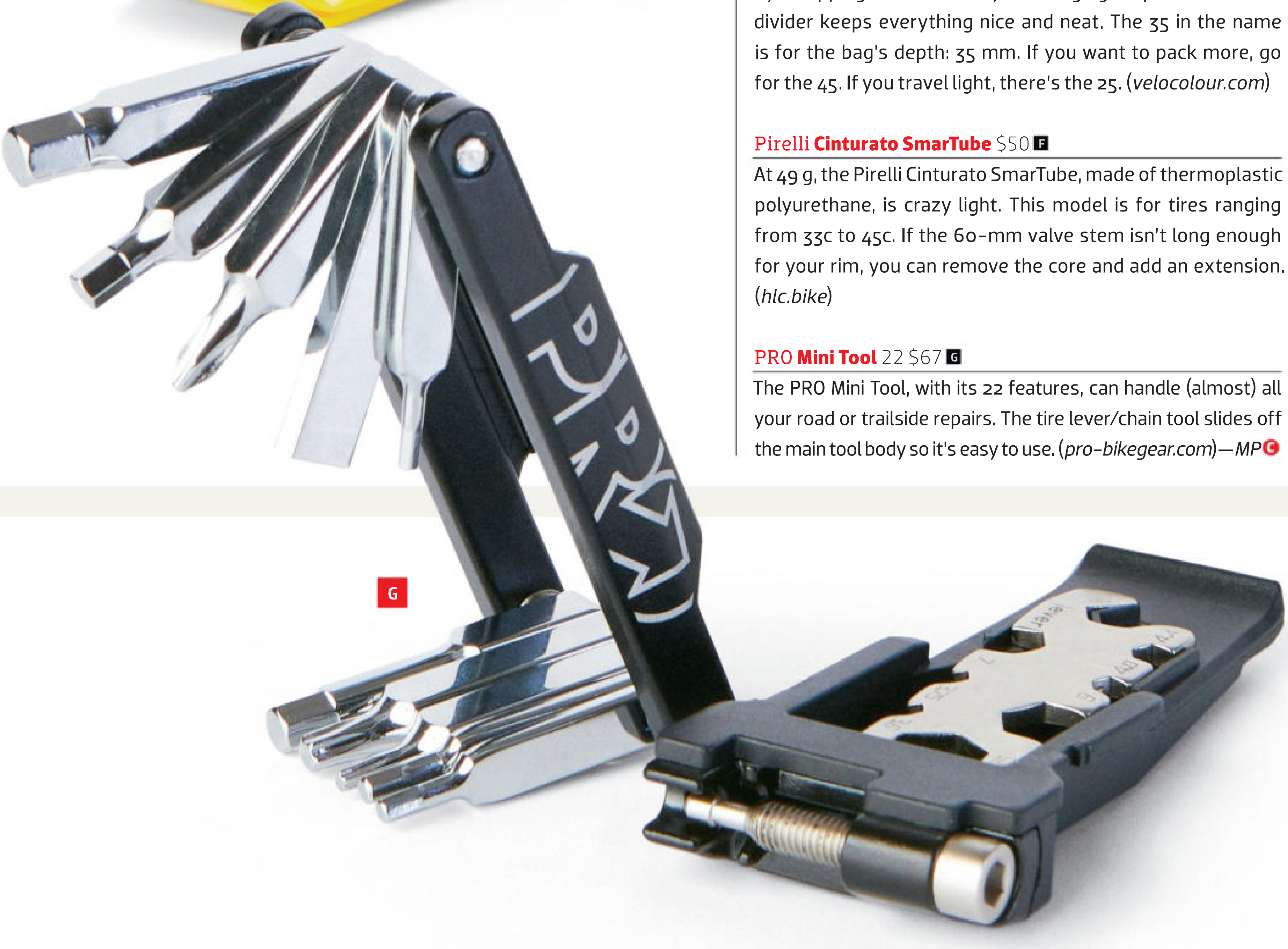
A
MINT'N DRY
ALL CONDITIONS LUBE
TOUTES CONDITIONS
DRY SEC
WET MOUILLÉ
CITY, ROAD AND OFF ROAD
hi-performance
ceramic lubricant
Lubrifiant céramique
haute performance
VILLE, ROUTE ET HORS ROUTE
BIODEGRADABLE – BIODÉGRADABLE
120 ml
4 fl. oz.
B
BONTRAGER
C
E
VéloCOLOUR

2023 BUYER'S GUIDE

GEAR

RIDE ESSENTIALS

Photos: Hiep Vu



Mint'N Dry **All Conditions Lube** $13 A

Don't use a wet-condition lube unless you really have to. That's the message from Montreal's Mint'N Dry. A wet lube tends to be quite sticky in order to protect the chain in messy conditions. Then, you'll have to clean the mess off. A all-conditions lube is a Goldilocks solution. It doesn't gum up like a wet lube but it protects against moisture better than a dry lube. (*mintndry.com*)

Giant **Clutch Bar-End Tool** $38 B

This tool lets you stash bacon in your handlebar. OK. Not real bacon, but five tubeless-tire plugs (which look like meagre strips of bacon) and a plug tool. The kit is an elegant way to carry tire-repair essentials. (*giant-bicycles.com*)

Bontrager **SE Elite Recycled Grip Set** $35 C, **Elite Recycled Water-Bottle Cage** $30 D

Both the grips and bottle cage are made from ocean recycled plastic—think discarded fishing nets getting put to good use. The grips have outer diameters of 32 mm and clamps to keep them secure on your bars. The cage will hold your bottle even on bumpy singletrack. The grips come in five colours, while the cage features 13 looks. (*trekbikes.com*)

VéloColour **Rocket Pocket 35 Seat Bag** $87 E

Toronto company VéloColour makes its Rocket Pocket seat bag in the provincial capital. The bag has a clever design. You can open its lid like a book for full access. When the bag is strapped to your bike, you get at your multi-tool easily by unzipping the lid halfway and hinging it open. An internal divider keeps everything nice and neat. The 35 in the name is for the bag's depth: 35 mm. If you want to pack more, go for the 45. If you travel light, there's the 25. (*velocolour.com*)

Pirelli **Cinturato SmarTube** $50 F

At 49 g, the Pirelli Cinturato SmarTube, made of thermoplastic polyurethane, is crazy light. This model is for tires ranging from 33c to 45c. If the 60-mm valve stem isn't long enough for your rim, you can remove the core and add an extension. (*hlc.bike*)

PRO **Mini Tool** 22 $67 G

The PRO Mini Tool, with its 22 features, can handle (almost) all your road or trailside repairs. The tire lever/chain tool slides off the main tool body so it's easy to use. (*pro-bikegear.com*)—*MP*

DESTINATION

GERMANY

Berlin
Munich
Lechbruck
Bad Tölz

A Fairytale Land for Cycling

The routes of Bavaria take you to medieval villages, castles, pastures and, of course, beer gardens

by **Melanie Chambers**

Bavaria, the southern province of Germany, was once its own kingdom. Today, it feels like it's ruled by the bicycle. Dedicated bike paths meander through medieval villages and by castles, farms and meadows. Cars yield to cyclists. Also, the biergartens are as numerous as bikes.

Don't forget, the beer-and-lemonade drink known as the radler originated in Bavaria. The story goes that in 1922, a group of cyclists arrived at the Kugler Alm biergarten, which is about a 13 km pedal south from Munich. The owner Franz Kugler was having a party and was low on brew. To make sure he had enough suds for the cyclist, he added equal parts lemon soda to the beer, and the radler was born.

From Munich, you can ride off in all directions to join a network of dedicated bike paths. The tourism department lists more than 250 bike-themed routes, which feature wine regions, city rides or art tours. This past September, I took on sections of the 475-km cycling loop in the Allgäu region in the southeast corner of Bavaria. It's mostly an asphalt bike path alongside rivers and train tracks, but it also deviates onto wide gravel roads, through cattle gates and forests.

The journey started in Munich. After picking up my bike rental from the train station, I rode behind a cyclist carrying two surfboards on his bike heading for the Eisbach surfing wave in Englischer Park. Another woman rode with her baby up front. At the fork in the road, I found myself cycling alone through a quiet dark forest, which sets the tone for my tranquil five-day trip.

In almost every village, the bike path cuts through horse stables and past tall maypoles (a 16th-century tradition). Erected every spring, each pole carries the village's coat of arms and often other local symbols—cows, pretzels and beer. At the entrance to every adorable gabled roof house, called *waldlerhaus* (houses of the forest), sits the most impeccable wood pile—not a space is wasted. They're almost works of art.

Biergartens are almost as ubiquitous as cows. Gut Kaltenbrunn am Tegernsee, in Gmund am Tegernsee (about 50 km south of Munich) is a series of former horse stables transformed into a gigantic biergarten and restaurant. While eating up every morsel of potato dumplings served in a creamy chanterelle mushroom sauce, I was just as impressed with the expansive views of Lake Tegernsee, framed by the snow-peaked Alps, as I was with the food. For much of the day's ride, I was surrounded by the Allgäu Alps, just one of the mountain ranges in the south of Germany.

Photo: Inzell Im Chiemgau

Crossing the Isar River bridge in Bad Tölz, the terracotta-tiled roofs and gingerbread-looking homes lined the banks. Surviving the Romans, plagues and wars, the town feels like a miniature dollhouse. Buildings in the main village have medieval fresco paintings of folklore, flowers or merchants and maidens.

The next day, I got mountain bike envy. About 36 km southwest of Bad Tölz, on the cable car to the top of Herzogstand mountain (elevation 1,731 m), the vivid turquoise Walchensee Lake was behind me. It almost seemed to glow. Ahead, I saw bits of singletrack on the edge of a cliff through the trees. The ride down this side of the mountain is pretty hairy. My hybrid wouldn't stand a chance.

The only structure on the mountain is the Berggasthaus Herzogstand restaurant and hotel. Built in 1902, it is ideal for post-hiking potato dumplings and *kaiserschmarrn*. The latter takes its name from the German words for emperor and scramble, or mess. It's a pastry with apples in a pancake batter. Served with jam, it is typically torn apart and shared. It's as ubiquitous as beer in Bavaria—another reason to love this place.

Arriving late in the village of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which sits near the border with Austria, I was in the valley and shadow of Germany's highest peak. The Zugspitze is 2,962 m above sea level. In winter, it's an international ski destination. The Austrian side of Zugspitze is also a destination for mountain bikers—more than 100 routes and trails, some snaking up lung popping switchbacks. I, on the other hand, opted for drinking beer on the back patio of the Biohotel Garmischer Hof, which has an onsite brewery. The region is also known for its spa treatments, so later, it only made sense to soak in the clawfoot tub with a frosty beer.

The next day in the Loisach Valley, through quiet forests with benches among the trees and bridges over calm rivers, a light sprinkle had coated the road and flowers. Inside the Schönegger Käse-Alm farm, there was a scene of revelry at the picnic tables with beer steins and plates of cheese. The Friday afternoon *käsespätzle* lunch was in full swing, featuring the pasta in the shape of cheese curds smothered in rich Emmentaler cheese, then baked and topped with fried onions. "Bavaria is really different from the other parts of Germany," said Ellen Kosburg, who was on vacation from Hamburg. "It's very traditional, but in a very nice way. And, the *käsespätzle* is the perfect dish for people who love

Photo: Dietmar Denger

> "It's mostly an asphalt bike path alongside rivers and train tracks, but it also deviates onto wide gravel roads through cattle gates and forests."

cheese. It's simply a must when in this region—a bit like beer."

Füssen was the next town, which has a similar feel as Bad Tölz. The Hohe Schloss castle from the 15th century presides over the village. Under every window is a painting of a balcony. Paintings? I asked my guide, who had met me in Füssen, about the painted balconies. "It was more expensive and fashionable to paint fake balconies than actually build them back then," she said. The village is adorable, too, but the show stopper is on the outskirts of town.

From a bike path, I could see the symbol from my princess-dreaming childhood. Looming over the Pöllat Gorge, Neuschwanstein castle is said to be the inspiration for the castle in Walt Disney's *Cinderella*. Inside is opulent with candelabras, mosaic-tiled floors and paintings with scenes from *Tristan and Isolde*, a classic 12th-century romance that ends horribly.

On the final day of my tour, I rode into Austria's Tyrolean mountain range, but not before a herd of cows with giant bells took their time crossing the road. I came to an expansive valley of green, dotted with cabins. The municipality of Tannheim is known for its network of hiking trails. But after my long day, I was exhausted. Dressed in a traditional *dirndl* (apron and long woolen skirt), my server plopped a frosty stein of beer beside my apple strudel. Had I known I'd be rained out the next day, I would have had more beer. But at that moment, I felt pretty royal.

Details

How to get there

Germany's airline Lufthansa, as well as Air Canada, have daily direct flights to the Munich International Airport.

Where to stay

In Munich, the Cocoon am Stachus Hotel (*cocoon-hotels.de*) strives for a chill, country-retreat vibe in Bavaria's capital city. Stay in the Bad Tölz's old town at Das Dietmanns (*dasdietmanns.de*). The Biohotel Garmischer Hof (*garmischhotel.de*) in Garmisch-Partenkirchen has both a craft brewery and spa, each with its own rejuvenative powers, of sorts. Check in to the Hotel Sonne in Füssen (*hotel-fuessen.de*) and Hotel Schwarzer Adler in Tannheim, Austria.

Where to eat

For a modern interpretation of the traditional Bavarian beer and food experience, there's Xaver's (*xaver-s.de*) in Munich. In Bad Tölz, head to Café im Süden (*cafeimsueden.de*) for its cute country charm and its vegan options. Make sure you get to the Schönegger Käse-Alm pasture, just south of Lechbruck, on a Friday for the traditional *käsespätzle*.

Photos: Bernhard Kunze, Dietmar Denger, Tobias Gerber

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Q&A

Sidney McGill

Committed to 'cross

Sidney McGill at the CX world championships

by **Sarah Kim Bonner**

This past February, Sidney McGill—coming off her best season to date in which she raced all 14 World Cup events—was part of an impressive Team Canada at the cyclocross world championships in Hoogerheide, the Netherlands. In her second year racing elite, the four-time Canadian cyclocross champion (twice as a junior and twice in under-23) put together progressively better results on the World Cup circuit, topping out with an eighth in Dublin. Balancing her studies at Queens University, Hashimoto's thyroiditis—an autoimmune disorder that affects the thyroid that she was diagnosed with in 2015—and a jam-packed calendar, McGill "welcomed the mud" on the world championship race day and finished in 25th.

You raced all 14 World Cup events. Was that always the plan?

It was the plan. Last year there were 16 world cups and I did 14. There were just 14 this year so I decided to go for it. It's gaining experience, it's seeing what it takes to do the full circuit, what the logistics are like—the travel stress and strain and the cost.

> *"Just no hesitation, full speed into the first snowy descent like a kid in the Edmonton River Valley."*

So, are you going to do it again next season?

I would, of course, love to. If it were up to me, I'd race every single race there is although the fatigue levels and health issues would prefer otherwise. So, no promises for next year, but I have good hope and I would not complain if I got to do them all again next year.

Which World Cup race was your favourite?

Val di Sole, Italy. Snow! I gotta stay true to Canada. It was so much fun. It reminds me of growing up, cycling at home in the winter. Pre-ride day everyone was so on edge and stressed because they aren't used to snow riding. And me: just no hesitation, full speed into the first snowy descent like a kid in the Edmonton River Valley.

You ended your season with the world championships in Hoogerheide where you finished 25th. Tell us about your race.

I had a good start. In the first lap, I was fighting for every position. There wasn't too much traffic; we had a small field, only 28 women, but it was a strong 28 women. It was kinda clear, my legs weren't great, but I kept pushing, just hoping they would come around if I dug deep enough. I fought as hard as I could and I wasn't giving up any positions from behind and held on for a 25th-place finish.

Were there any particularly tricky spots on the lap?

Just before Pit 2, there was an off-camber climb and a long false-flat climb that was rough and bumpy. It got so muddy throughout the day. You were pedalling steady power but the wheels were just spinning beneath you. At one point, I was grabbing onto the fences and was trying to move forward like that.

How do you feel about your performance?

Although I didn't feel the greatest, I can still be happy with the fight I threw down and coming away with some good goals achieved for the season. I was happy with a muddy course and had fun out there, but just didn't have much in the legs and it's been a long season. I'd been having health issues. It's my autoimmune thyroid issue. I was born with it and it's never going away, so I just have to find the right balance. I'm still working on it.

STATS

Hometown	Edmonton
Born	Feb. 1, 1999
Bike	Liv Brava (unsponsored)
Team	OneBike
Favourite CX race	Val di Sole

How was the Team Canada experience?

It was such a vibe. I got to hang out with Team Canada every day. Before and after my race, the amount of spectators who stopped me to say congratulations to Canada was insane.

How did you celebrate?

At the end of every race, all the staff and mechanics, we'd all have a sip of maple whisky to celebrate the day. It's a nice tradition that started with Team OneBike.

What are your plans for the off-season?

I'm going to Israel and then Vietnam for a work stay. I'm staying with a family on a community farm. I'll be an extra set of hands on the farm and teaching sports and English to local children. It's not often I get time off the bike and I want to take the opportunity to have a different experience.

Photo: CX Hairs

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